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D.M. Bennett

INTERROGATORIES
TO
J E H O V A H

UPON VARIOUS SUBJECTS,
TO WHICH ANSWERS ARE EARNESTLY DESIRED.

OFFERED UP

From the Office of The Truth Seeker
BY THE EDITOR.

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- "Make intercession to the Lord of Hosts."—JER. xxvii, 18.
"Entreat now the face of the Lord thy God."—1 KINGS xiii, 6.
"Call unto me and I will answer thee."—JER. xxxiii, 3.
"Ask and it shall be given you."—MATT. vii, 7,
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PREFACE.

It is but necessary to say that the interrogatories in the following pages appeared in the columns of THE TRUTH SEEKER, from week to week, for more than a year past. They were written hurriedly and without engaging much careful thought. It is not improbable that some repetitions have taken place, as it was not easy to remember, from time to time, what subjects had been treated in previous installments.

It is to be feared that our Christian friends may feel more or less shocked at the familiar and fearless manner in which the inquiries are made, but, let them be assured, no wrong has been intended. The subjects introduced possess no small importance, and they are such questions as many will be glad to receive replies to. Besides, assurances have been given in abundance that Jehovah is pleased to have his children approach him for information. He has often enjoined them to seek him early and to make known their wants to him. Let them not be timid about the matter and fear that his anger may be excited at the manner in which the inquiries have been made. It is evident Jehovah is not excited to anger as easily as a few thousand years ago. It is to be presumed that a favorable modification has taken place in his disposition in this respect. If accounts are true, there was a time when he was extremely irascible and impetuous, and when the slightest provocation would throw him into a furious rage; but of late he seems far more undisturbed and far more difficult to be provoked to frenzy. In fact there has been evidence, for a long time past, that he has allowed himself to become excited, or that he has shown a disposition to take vengeance upon his

helpless creatures. It is not too much to say that in the evolution which has taken place in all that has an existence, the Jewish Jehovah has become about as harmless and inoffensive as Brahm, the god of the Hindoos, Baal, the god of the Chaldeans, Ormuzd, the god of the Persians, Fohi, the god of the Chinese, Osiris, the god of the Egyptians, Jupiter, the god of the Greeks and Romans, Odin, the god of the Scandinavians, and Mumbo Jumbo, the god of several of the African tribes. The time was when all these gods were thought to be terrible and powerful. The most extraordinary conduct was imputed to them, and the most furious and heartless deeds were laid to their charge. But all that has passed away. They have become as harmless as sucking babes, and the world fears nothing this moment from their anger or malice.

This is rapidly becoming the case with the Jewish deity. The more he is studied, or rather, the more the laws governing the universe are understood, the more apparent it becomes to observing minds that natural causes govern natural operations and produce natural results; that a result never has taken place which had not a natural and sufficient cause to produce it. This being better understood than formerly, it becomes apparent that there is very little for Brahm, Baal, Fohi, Mumbo Jumbo, & Co. to attend to. They are allowed to take a long sleep, from which, probably, they will never awake. If Jehovah joins the sleepers, the rotation and revolution of the earth will not be impeded in the slightest degree, and everything on this tolerably well-regulated little planet will move along just as quietly as though the gods were all awake and bustling about as in olden times.

Let those who fear lest the propounder of the following interrogatories be visited with some dire vengeance possess thier souls in perfect patience. If they will only see that they themselves behave with propriety, we will be answerable for the conduct of all the gods. D. M. B.

Truth Seeker Office, July 4, 1878.

INTERROGATORIES TO JEHOVAH.

O thou unseeable, unknowable, inconceivable, unthinkable, incomprehensible and greatly misrepresented Being, Person, Essence, Power or Principle! With uncovered head, with an honest purpose, and with due reverence for all that is great, and true, and good, allow one of earth's humblest and most earnest citizens to address thee, and to claim thy attention for a brief period.

A little more than twelve months ago thy petitioner addressed an open, but respectful, letter to the individual widely reported to be thy son—thy only begotten son, in fact—begotten, too, under very peculiar circumstances, but still resembling the fabulous individuals who were earlier reported to have a god for a father; to be explicit, the personage addressed was no less than Jesus, whom Mary is said to have borne thee.

Although the appeal was earnest in spirit and respectful in language; although the information sought was greatly desired, it is to be regretted that up to this time, though more than a year has passed away, he has not vouchsafed to take the slightest notice of the invocation alluded to, neither directly, nor by any of the numerous individuals in the country who claim that they are transacting business for him, and that they have "power of attorney" to speak and write in his name.

After thus patiently waiting sixty weeks, and obtaining no response to said prayer, though the same has been printed and sent over the country in many directions, so that his eyes, and the eyes of his agents, might easily fall upon

it, it has occurred to thy humble petitioner, Most August Presence, or Absence, as the case may be, that possibly a mistake was made in the party addressed, and that in place of the son—the second member of the firm—the head of the establishment should be directly appealed to. If this was an error, please look leniently upon it, and be assured that no disrespect or slight was intended. Since it has been extensively reported of thee that thou takest pleasure in being entreated of, that thou wishest people in this world to ask thee for what they desire; and since thou art placed on the record as saying, "Pray to me and I will hearken to you;" since the promise is made, "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;" we feel that there can be no impropriety in asking thee for the knowledge we crave.

We wish not to be too pressing in our entreaties, nor too bold in our requests. We shall ask nothing we do not wish to know, and trust we shall be no more importunate, no more presuming than are those who claim to be thy priests, when they loudly appeal to thee, first flattering thee with fulsome adulation, then requesting of thee all manner of possible and impossible things, and lastly, presuming to advise thee how to conduct thy business, and often even commanding thee to take the course prescribed by them. We wish to err not in these ways, but simply to make enquiries touching subjects upon which we crave knowledge. Believing we are as much a child of thine as those who assume to be priests, we claim an equal right to address thee. If we are successful in obtaining the information sought, we will be duly grateful.

O Jehovah, we would know more of thee than those who assume to know all about thee are able to tell us; whether thou art an anthropomorphic person having form and parts and organs like a man, and having a certain location or throne somewhere in the sky, or whether thou art simply an essence or principle, without organs and parts, without form and shape, occupying no one point in space more than another, and being equally diffused in all worlds alike, throughout the entire Universe.

Art thou composed of matter in a highly subtilized form—but still *matter*—as is all else pertaining to the Universe, or

art thou an unperceivable, imponderable, intangible, impossible *nothing* of which no cognizance can be taken ?

Hast thou intelligence? and if so, canst thou possess intelligence without having an organization by which intelligence is produced? Dost thou have thoughts? Can thinking be done without a brain?

If we are to conclude that thou art *something*, in contradistinction to *nothing*, are we not to understand that thou art really *matter*, in some one of the many forms in which it exists, or shall we regard thee simply as *force* or *power* which permeates matter, is one of its constituent qualities, and is never found separate or apart from it?

Thou art said to be the author of the Universe, including all the *matter* which enters into its composition. If this is so, didst thou also originate the substance or material of which thou art composed? If not, whence did it come?

Is it any more strange that the vast Universe should forever have existed without an origin or a designer, than that the being capable of creating it should be without origin or designer?

If the order and harmony displayed in the Universe is an indication of a designer, and proves that thou planned and formed it all, does not the superior order and harmony which must necessarily help to make up thy character and existence more strongly prove that thou also must have had a designer and creator?

If the harmony in the Cosmos demands an author, does not the superior harmony which must exist in that designing mind still more require an author? On this basis would we ever get through with imagining creators of creators and designers of designers? Is it not just as easy for the mind to accept the eternal existence of the Universe as the eternal existence of its maker?

As it is impossible, by all the appliances of knowledge and art, to destroy or drive out of existence a particle, a grain of matter, is it not reasonable to conclude that it never came into existence? Is it any more unreasonable to think that the Universe ever existed in some form, than to admit that its maker ever existed without a beginning?

Scientists have demonstrated that matter may change its

form an unlimited number of times, and that one form may evolve into another, but is it within thy power, with all the invisible aids thou art able to summon to thy assistance, to make *something of nothing*?

As it is quite possible for us to admit the fact that time and space have ever existed, and could not have had a beginning, is it any more unreasonable to conclude also that *matter* or *substance* or *something* has also ever existed and occupied this eternal space and time?

If matter, space and time had once a beginning, and were created by thee, of what wert thou composed? where didst thou abide? and when didst thou first devise the creation of matter, space, and time?

Jehovah, we would respectfully ask whether thou art really the Supreme God that presides over the boundless Universe—the eternal principle that pervades every atom of matter—or art thou simply the tutelar deity of the Jews who had a limited domain and limited power—taking more interest in that diminutive nation than in any other or all other nations—similar to the tutelar deities that were supposed to rule over other nations and who took a special interest in their welfare, fighting their battles, presiding at their feasts, blessing them when faithful, and punishing them when refractory and disobedient?

As other gods, like Brahm, Ormuzd, Osiris, Fohi, Zeus, Devatat, Indra, Baal, and even Jupiter and Allah, were known in the world earlier and more widely than thyself, is it at all strange that they have severally been supposed to be the supreme god, and that thou hast been looked upon with slight indignity?

Is it not true that many feats and performances which were earlier attributed to them have been borrowed by thy admirers and worshipers and appropriated to thy credit?

If the people called Christians, having no original god of their own, had accepted either of the gods of India, Chaldea, Assyria, Persia, China, Thibet, Siam, Egypt, Greece, Rome, Germany, Gaul, or Britain, instead of Jewry or Palestine, would they not have been equally as much justified as now, and would they not have had equal grounds to have insisted

that their god and their theology were the only true variety ?

In view of the countless gods that have been believed in within the last few thousand years, each nation and tribe having a special god of their own, and their gods possessing characters and dispositions just on a par with those who believed in them, is it not safe to conclude that it is more true that men have made gods, than that gods have made men?

Are there any infallible reasons for deciding that the Jews were any more fortunate or any more correct in the god-making business than the nations who lived before them and at the same time? How are we poor mortals of the nineteenth century to know that the God of the Jews is any more the "one true God" than any other of the very numerous gods which the world has accepted and worshiped?

Art thou not equally the Father of all men, all nations, all creeds, whether Asiatics, Africans, Europeans or Americans; whether Pagans, Heathens, Brahmins, Buddhists, Parsees, Jews, Gentiles, Christians, Mohammedans, Quakers, Nondescripts, or All-descripts; whether believers or unbelievers in this religion or that religion, this creed or that creed? Do not all men share equally in thy love, thy kindness, thy watchfulness and thy protection?

Have the Jews, or had they at any time a special claim or *patent* upon thy paternity, thy affection and thy care? Have Christians any greater share in thy universal presence, regard and love than the veriest Infidels and unbelievers? Can any man's honest belief either give him a special claim upon thy favors or alienate him from thee?

Can a man believe or disbelieve whatever he pleases, or whatever he is told to believe; or is he compelled to believe or disbelieve according to the proofs presented to him and the evidences he receives? Is not an intelligent belief wholly independent of choice and dictation?

As nearly all the gods which were supposed to live before thee, and which had a larger following than thou were less cruel and blood-thirsty, did not devise wars, and did not command carnage, are we from this fact to conclude that they were more merciful and benignant than thou? or are we to at-

tribute the difference in the character of the various gods to the difference in the character of the nations over which they ruled and which devised them?

Did not peaceable nations usually have peaceable gods? and did not warlike and fighting nations have warlike and fighting gods? Would the ancient Jews have been satisfied with a god who was not sanguinary, warlike, and fond of strife, and who loved and esteemed them above all the other nations of the earth?

Did not all the gods of olden time show special partialities and love for the particular nations and peoples over which they ruled, and a degree of indifference or enmity towards other nations and peoples, as well as to other gods? For this reason, is it not safe for us to conclude of each of them, that they were not the Supreme Ruler of this world and all other worlds, but were mere tutelary, local, or neighborhood gods, whose power and care and love did not extend beyond their immediate jurisdiction, the same as the king of a country? Wert thou an exception to this rule?

In short, has not the belief in gods been the grand, central superstition, around which all other superstitions have clustered, and would it not have been much better for the inhabitants of this world if they had believed only in the natural powers and forces of the Universe, and had never believed in a god of any kind?

Jehovah, we would ask thee of the morning of the Universe, of the millions of immense and shining orbs which revolve in space; of the origin of the sun, the solar system, including the earth on which we dwell. Didst thou form all these scarcely six thousand years ago, in the short space of six days, and from nothing? Does not the Bible teach us that thou didst? Can the language employed in describing creation be fairly construed to mean anything else?

Are there not incontrovertible proofs found in the strata of rocks and formations, the slow cuttings of rivers and streams, the deposits that have been made in caves, in low grounds, etc., that the earth has lived far more than six thousand years? Have not some of the most learned geologists and scientists reasons for believing that the earth has had an existence at least hundreds of thousands of years,

and that animal life, including man, has been here scores of thousands of years—ten times longer, at least, than the Bible tells of? Is not the testimony of the rocks more worthy of our credence than the testimony of a mere man, whether named Moses, John, or James, and who was unquestionably ignorant of all the facts pertaining to the subject?

If six thousand years ago all suns, all stars, all worlds sprang suddenly into existence at thy bidding, where wert thou, what were thy occupations, amusements and employments a million years ago and thousands of millions of years added to that number?

Wert thou not lonely, and did not the time hang heavily upon thy hands, when, for countless decillions of ages, there were no suns, no stars, no earth, no material of which to form them, no being in existence save thyself?

If, during all this inconceivably long period, and millions of ages longer, thou existed and possessed all the intelligence, all the wisdom, and all the power that has been ascribed to thee, why didst thou not speak this little earth, our comparatively small sun, and the limited portions of the Universe within the bounds of our vision into existence millions of ages before thou didst?

May we ask if it required the endless and numberless eras that passed over thy head before the morning of the creation, to mature thy plans and to perfect thy arrangements?

If it required such a vast period, or millions of periods, to devise thy plans and purposes, does it not imply a limit to thy power and will, that so many ages were needful to perfect the arrangements that might have been accomplished in a moment of time?

If thou formedst the Universe and it had no previous existence, and thou hadst no material of which to make it, and none existed save thyself, didst thou not make it of thyself? In other words, is not all that exists a part of thee, and did it not always exist?

If, as some assert, the material of which the Universe is composed always existed, but without form or order, and did not have to be created, is it not as logical to conclude that if matter in the concrete existed from all eternity, that

the forces and potencies which are inseparable from it also existed from all eternity? If matter did not require to be created is it any more probable that force and motion had to be created? Where matter is, is there not always force and life, active or latent?

Jehovah, may we ask when thou madest this globe if thou wast on the *spot* or wert thou at Alcyone, Sirius, or some of the far more distant orbs, whose light, at the immense velocity at which it travels, is thousands of years in reaching us?

If it occupied thee five days to form this small world and what exists upon it, how couldst thou form the sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn, Jupiter, Uranus, Neptune, the numerous asteroids, moons, and comets belonging to this system, and the endless millions of other vast suns, fixed stars, and worlds, with which the vast abyss of space is filled, and in one day? Is not the statement that thou createdst all those innumerable suns and worlds in one fifth of the time that it occupied thee in creating this little world, something of a mistake? Can the legend which purports to tell us of the *creation* be fully relied upon? Did the party or parties who wrote it fully understand the nature of the subject which they undertook to treat?

Is it true that the earth existed three days—or three vast periods, as some insist that is meant—that vegetation arrived at full perfection, trees and herbs bringing forth fruits and seeds before there was a sun in existence? Is not that statement a positive error on the part of the writer of the account?

Did all forms of vegetable and animal life exist upon this earth within five days from the time when the particles forming it were first brought together? Is there not rather strong reason for thinking that a vast period of time must have passed by before the earth could have been in a condition to sustain any forms of vegetable life? Does not the crystallization of the rocks, the formation and deposits of the coal strata existing in various parts of the earth conclusively prove that very long periods of time must have existed before the present condition of the earth could have been inaugurated?

Have not immense upheavals taken place, causing islands, mountains, and continents of which man has no record? Do not the sea-shells found on hills and mountains, hundreds of feet above the level of the sea clearly prove that those localities were once at the water level?

Do not the fossilized remains of animal life found in the lower strata of rocks, and the aggregations of rock and earth above them, often amounting to hundreds of feet, establish the fact that matter has been largely added to the earth in the form of meteors and aerolites which during long ages have been attracted to the earth from the regions of space through which the earth passes in its orbit round the sun and with the sun in its orbit around some other center? Are not these aggregations still taking place?

Does not the existence of coal strata in the frigid zone as far north as the eighty-second parallel of latitude, and the remains recently found there by the British Arctic Expedition under Capt. Nares and Com. Markham, of a former evergreen forest, of fossils, coal, and of some thirty distinct varieties of plants, including saxifrage, sorrel, dwarf oaks, and even poppies, prove that at one time in the remote past that portion of the earth was in a latitude warm enough for the vegetation which formed the coal strata to flourish as well as the other varieties of plants named to perfect themselves? By the very slow degrees by which the latitudes of the earth are changed, would it not require, to perfect the coal-producing plants at the eighty-second parallel of north latitude, a period many times more remote than the time assigned for the creation of the world in Genesis?

Is it true, as related in Genesis, that all forms of animal life came into existence about the same time or within a day or two of each other? and is the order given in Genesis, in which the animal creation appeared, strictly correct? Is it not true, rather, that the lower forms of animal life came into existence first, and that long eras elapsed before the fully developed forms made their appearance? Is not this lesson taught by the records of the rocks?

Are there not indisputable proofs in the rocks forming the crust of the earth that reptiles and creeping things, and

the class of animals known as *amphibia*, existed long before the birds and feathered tribes which fly in the air? Is not what is called the "Mosaic account" at fault in this particular?

If, at the creation, the heavenly bodies were made by thee to revolve on their axes and to course in their orbits as they have since continued to do; if the earth was, as now, only a subordinate planet revolving around the sun, and if thou dictatedst the account given of the creation and the origin of all things, why, may we ask, didst thou not cause the fact to be correctly stated? Why was the Hebrew and Christian world left, for thousands of years in total ignorance of the great truth that the earth is round, that it is not a broad area of land with "ends," "corners," and "foundations," that instead of its being the center and main part of the Universe, it by no means is the center, and forms only an infinitesimal part of the great whole? If it was thy will that men should know the truth, why did the world have to wait for these important facts until Copernicus discovered them and Galilio, by the telescope, confirmed them?

If the sun, moon and stars do not pass round the earth every twenty-four hours, why was the account so written? Does not the gross ignorance which existed upon this subject, by the parties who wrote the various parts of the Bible, conclusively prove that they were not inspired from the source of all knowledge, but that they were ignorant of the simplest truths of nature, and wrote as ignorant men?

When, in the morning of creation, thou foundest light and darkness mixed together, didst thou find them both equally material, or didst thou find light a product of material forces, and darkness simply a negation—an absence of light? Can light and darkness exist together in a homogeneous mass or mixture? Can darkness have an existence save where the light is withdrawn?

How is it, Jehovah, about the *firmament* which thou art described as having made to divide the waters above from the waters below it? Of what was it composed to be of sufficient strength and tenacity to prevent large bodies of water from coming down, and other large bodies from arising? How long did that firmament remain in existence?

Does it still exist? Are there now vast quantities of water above the firmament ready to pour down upon the earth if there was not a firmament to hold it up? Does not the very way in which the statement is made show conclusively that the person who made it did not understand the nature of the subject he was talking about?

May we enquire, since, according to the account, the earth had an existence before the sun was created, for the trees, and shrubs, and plants to grow and perfect their seed and fruit, as there was light enough to constitute *morning* and *evening*, whether the creation of the sun was not a somewhat unnecessary piece of work? If there were day and night without it, if vegetation of all kind could perfect itself without it, could it not have been dispensed with altogether?

Is it not true, rather, that the sun was originally the source of the solar system? That it contained in the long ago, in a gaseous or nebulous state, all the material of which the planets, asteroids, moons, and comets are composed which revolve around it, and which in keeping with some grand law inherent in it, separated, or was projected, from the parent body? Is it not preposterous to say that the child is older than the parent?

In taking the Bible account of the creation of the world, and the entire Universe, are we not justified in regarding it as a fair representation of the light and knowledge the world possessed upon the subject at the time it was written, a synopsis of the crude legends and traditions that had been handed down from primitive and pre-historic times, before the light of science had shed abroad its rays among men—rather than as a direct emanation from thee, or as spoken by thy voice, and directed by thy mind?

Great Jehovah, according to thy servant Isaiah, thou hast said, "Come now, let us reason together." We cheerfully accept this invitation; it is just what we are anxious to do. We wish to *reason*, to *converse*, and to obtain information; and we feel an assurance that thou wilt take no offense because we desire knowledge and ask thee for it. We would talk and reason with thee about the origin of man on this earth. The account in Genesis says that thou madest him of the dust of the ground, fashioned him in thine own image

and likeness, and breathed into his nostrils, and he became a living being. Are we to understand this as a literal truth? Didst thou make man precisely in thine own image, male and female, as they are? Art thou then in the form of a man, with head and eyes and mouth, and arms and legs, with both male and female sexual organs and peculiarities?

Didst thou really take a quantity of crude earth, and when properly moistened, fashion it with thy hands in resemblance of thy own form and physique, and then blow into his nose and set him to moving, breathing, and thinking?

By what strange metamorphosis, by what law thou ever establishedst in Nature, couldst thou suddenly and directly change crude earth into delicate living organisms, as the heart, the lungs, the bowels, the circulatory system, the eyes, the arteries and veins, the brain, and the nervous fluid?

Was that the way in which thou hast performed all the operations and productions that have had an existence in the Universe? Have not, rather, all the operations and changes in Nature been brought about by gradual evolution, and not by sudden creation without precedent or parentage?

Is there not, Jehovah, two distinct accounts or legends of the creation given in Genesis, written by different persons, and having no connection? Is not one the first chapter of Genesis and first three verses of the second chapter, and the other, what follows after?

In the first version, as it is was in the original, did not the word *Elohim* invariably mean *Gods*—more than one? and should not a correct translation have read, “In the beginning *the gods* created the heavens and the earth;” and again, “*The gods* said, ‘Let us make man in our own image and after our own likeness?’ ”

Whomwert thou speaking to when thou saidst, “Let *us* make man in *our* own image and after *our* own likeness? And whomwert thou speaking to and of, when afterwards, as if addressing companions, thou saidst, “Behold, the man has become as one of *us*? ” Is not the language improper if no being was in existence save thyself? Does one person constitute *us*? and would one say to himself, “Behold, the man has become as one of *us*? ” Were there not other gods, and goddesses, who were believed to have an existence by

the person who wrote the first statement? Was it not a positive misrendition to translate *Elohim* into *God*?

By the first version does it not appear that man was made male and female like thyself, at the first instance, and all at one operation? Is there in the first version any indication that thou madest man first, and then, finding him lonely, it occurred to thee that it would be well for him to have a companion, when thou puttest him in a very sound sleep, and by a surgical operation thou tookst a rib from him, of which thou formedst a beautiful woman? Are not the two accounts very unlike each other?

If Genesis, i. 27, was correctly translated would it not read, "*So the gods created man in their own image; in the image of the gods created they him; male and female created they them?*"

Is it not true, we repeat, that the first version was written by a different person and at another time from the last version, and probably at an earlier date, when *gods* in multitude were believed in; and did not the translators do violence to the original meaning of the language, to make it mean *one god*?

Was not the first version really an old pagan legend, descriptive of creation and was it not borrowed, or appropriated, a long time after by the person or persons who wrote or compiled the book of Genesis and placed it at the head of the Bible? And was not this writing and compiling done nearly two thousand years after the time of the events named in the book? Was the book of Genesis in existence more than five hundred years before the Christian era? Is there any proof whatever that it was?

Does not the second version of the creation of man show an entirely different authorship from the first? By the second does it appear that when thou formedst man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils, thou intendedst to make a female as a companion for the man? Does not this version state that thou madest man, planted the Garden of Eden, that thou causedst to grow out of the ground "every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food," including the tree of knowledge and the tree of life; that thou causedst a river to go out of Eden to water

the garden, which parted and formed four different rivers; that thou placedst the man in the garden to dress it and to take care of it; that thou gavest him his orders and commands as to what he should do, of what he might eat, and of what he might not eat, describing the penalties that should fall upon him in case of violation of orders—was not all this done before thou thoughtest to form a woman? Was not the creation of woman, then, wholly an afterthought?

As thou hadst previously formed all the animal creation, male and female, at the start, how is it that, according to the second version, thou didst not the same with man? How didst thou expect he would be able to propagate his species?

May we ask why thou pursuedst a different course in forming the female of the human race, than with the various other varieties of the animal kingdom? Or didst thou take a rib of each male animal of which to form a female? If thou hadst done this, should not the account have been written accordingly?

If the dust of the ground was the proper material of which to form man, would it not also have answered equally well for woman? Are not the two sexes composed almost precisely of the same elements? Would it not have been easier to scrape up a little dust on the ground, than to have put Adam in a sound sleep and extract one of his ribs? Was a rib-bone the best material to make a woman of that thou couldst select? Didst thou find it much more trouble to make woman than man?

As to the tree of life and the fruit which it bore, and which thou placedst before our first parents, was it not a great mistake in thee to place such a temptation before them? In view of the immense misfortunes and evils that have grown out of it, has it never occurred to thee that it would have been vastly better if thou hadst never created that tree and that fruit?

Didst thou not know before thou madest that tree, that its fruit would be the ruin of the perfect man and woman thou madest, and through them be a deadly curse to the whole world? If thou didst not know this, was not thy knowledge limited and defective?

How could a being of infinite knowledge, infinite power, and infinite goodness, create a human pair and place within their reach a deadly, poisonous fruit which he knew would not only destroy them, but hopelessly damn innumerable millions of their unfortunate descendants, who must, for that act of the first pair, be doomed to everlasting torments? Would the worst man that ever lived do such an act?

Didst thou really intend that the result should be just what it was, and that man should partake of the forbidden fruit? If thou didst not intend it, are we not to conclude that thou wert unable to foresee and forestall the conditions that might arise? Does not this very fact prove that thou didst not possess infinite knowledge, infinite power, and infinite goodness?

If thou didst not want the fruit of the tree of knowledge eaten, why didst thou create it? Didst thou make it for a decoy and a snare? Unless thou wishedst the man and woman not to partake of it, why, may we ask again, didst thou ever place it before them? If thou didst not want them and their offspring to fall under a perpetual curse, why didst thou ever make the conditions possible for them to do so?

Would the worst man that ever lived be so cruel and unfeeling as to actually enact and produce the very measures that would inevitably bring endless suffering and unhappiness upon millions of helpless and miserable beings? Could any wise and good being pursue a course so hard-hearted so unfeeling, so merciless?

Inasmuch as thou gavest the command that the fruit should not be eaten before thou createdst the woman, was she really guilty for eating the fruit which she had never been told by thee not to eat of it?

In view of the vast epochs and ages which thou hadst to premeditate and plan the creation of the world and of mankind to people it, has it never occurred to thee that thy first effort at making man, and at constituting him an innocent and a permanently happy being, was an unfortunate failure? And from the experience thou now hast had, couldst thou not do vastly better? Is experience a help to thee, as it is to creatures of thy forming? If thou wert to do it again,

wouldst thou do just as thou didst before?

Was it not indeed a hard fate thou plannedst for thy creatures—to bring them into existence with the dispositions, propensities, and possibilities to partake of a fruit created and placed before them, on purpose for them to eat, and with the knowledge that they assuredly would eat it, and then to condemn them to helpless and hopeless wretchedness for doing it?

Cannot man with justice charge his creation, his temptation, his weakness, his fall, and his consequent punishment, equally upon thee? Hadst thou been in his condition, with the same disposition, the same frailty, and the same inexperience; had the same temptation been placed before thee, wouldst thou not have yielded in the same manner? And would it not have been a cruelly unjust sentence that thou and thy offspring should forever be doomed to the pangs of endless torture on account of it?

Rather than that this woful state of things should exist, would it not have been infinitely better if thou hadst not made the earth or the Universe, and that thou hadst spent a few millions more of years in listless idleness? Is not employment that is productive only of unhappiness and misery, immensely worse than no employment at all?

Can it be possible that the eating of a little fruit of thy own creation, by two persons of total inexperience, was so great an offense, so heinous an act of immorality, that thou couldst neither forgive them, nor their offspring after them, forever? Let us again ask, Were they really so culpable for the act that there was no forgiveness for them for following out the plan prescribed for them from a beginningless eternity, as thou madst the conditions and actually laid the plans?

We desire to ask thee, Jehovah, why thou madest the *tree of life*, and why thou wert so fearful that our first parents would partake of its fruit? Would the fruit have seriously injured them? Didst thou deem death better for them than life?

Was it not, according to the record, more to prevent their putting forth their hands and taking of the tree of life, that thou turnedst them out of the garden, than because they

had eaten of the tree of knowledge? Didst thou not station cherubims to guard the tree of life and to keep Adam and Eve away from it, and for that purpose only? May we ask whether those cherubims were created for the purpose, or had they a previous existence? If the latter, why was no mention made of the fact?

Would it not have been better, far better, to permit Adam and Eve to partake freely of the tree of knowledge and the tree of life, so that they could not only have attained unto full wisdom, but that the seeds of death would have been removed far from them? Did Satan, any way, do a very bad thing in inducing them to partake of the tree of knowledge? Did it not open their eyes, so they were able to judge of good and evil? Did not his words on that occasion prove true, and has he not been grossly slandered in regard to that little circumstance; has he not been accused of lying when he did not lie at all? Were not his words more true on that occasion than thine own, when thou saidst they should surely die? Has not that small taste which they got of the tree of knowledge been of great service to the world in leading to a search after truth and light? Had Satan induced them also to partake of the tree of life, would not the results have been equally favorable? Did they not, surreptitiously, or otherwise, get a taste of its fruit to enable them to live nine hundred years?

How is it that the tree of knowledge and the tree of life have never been known since the time thou placedst them in the garden of Eden, that naturalists and botanists have never been able to find any specimens of them in all the world? Didst thou find that thy experiment in making them proved so disastrous a one, thou tookest them out of existence lest human beings should partake of their fruit and thus become wise and immortal?

Did, as a matter of fact, knowledge and eternal life ever grow upon tree, so that all a person had to do to obtain knowledge or eternal life was to eat of the fruit of those trees; or is the whole story a fable? Is not, for that matter, the entire story about the creation of the world from nothing, the formation of men from the dust of the ground, and the temptation, and the fall, as many learned men

have regarded it, a mere fable, or an epic poem? Is it not time that intelligent men and women based their theological and religious ideas and opinions upon a truer and more rational foundation?

Great Jehovah, we would enquire of thee respecting the origin and nature of *evil*. Thou art said to be the author of all things and all existences; didst thou create *evil*? Has *evil* an eternal existence, without beginning or end? Has it a personality—an individual, organized existence, separate and apart from thee? Or art thou the *summum totum* of all power, all life, all existences, including *evil*, whether possessing personality or not? May, then, *good* and *evil*, *God* and *Devil*, be considered of one origin, from one source, of one nature and one existence?

If thou didst not create *evil*, whence did it come? If it has forever existed independent of thee, is it not true that there are two Supreme Powers, two Almighty Gods, a good one and a bad one?

By what thou hast spoken through thy prophets, are we not to understand that thou didst create *evil*, and that it is from thee? Did not Isaiah say for thee, "I am the Lord and there is none else; there is no God besides me. I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create *evil*; I, the Lord, do all these things" (Isaiah i, 5-7). "He also is wise, and will bring *evil*, and will not call back his words" (Isaiah xxxi. 2). Did not Amos say, "Shall there be *evil* in a city and the Lord had not done it?" (Amos iii. 6.) Did not Job say, "What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive *evil*?" (Job ii. 10.) Didst thou not say by Samuel, "Thus saith the Lord: behold, I will raise up *evil* against thee?" (2 Sam. xii. 11.) Didst thou not speak through the mouth of thy prophet Jeremiah, "Thus saith the Lord, I frame *evil* against you, and devise a device against you?" (Jer. xviii. 11.) "For I have set my face against this city, for *evil*, and not for good" (Jer. xix. 10). "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, behold, I will set my face against you for *evil*" (Jer. xliv. 11). Did not Micah, thy prophet, say, "*Evil* came down from the Lord onto the gate of Jerusalem"? (Mic. i. 12.) Thus saith the Lord, "Behold, against this family do I devise an *evil*, from which ye

shall not remove your necks" ? (Mic. ii. 3.) Did not Moses say to the people for thee, " See, I have set before thee this day, life and *good*, and death and *evil*?" (Deut. xxx. 15.) Did not Joshua say, " As all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you, so shall the Lord bring upon you all *evil* things, until he have destroyed you?" (Josh. xxxiii. 15.) Did not Huldah, thy prophetess, say, " Thus saith the Lord, I will bring *evil* upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof" ? (2 Kings xxi. 16.) Did not Jeremiah say, " Hear, O earth; behold, I will bring *evil* upon this people." " I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary of holding in; I will pour it out upon the children abroad." " Saith the Lord, I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people" (Jer. viii. 19-21). " Thus saith the Lord, behold, I will bring *evil* upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them" (Jer. xi. 11). " Behold, I will bring *evil* upon this place." " I will make this city desolate and a hissing." " And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons, and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of their friend." " Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, behold, I will bring upon this city, and upon all her towns all the *evil* that I have pronounced against it" (Jer. xix, 3, 8, 9, 15); and " behold, I will bring *evil* upon all flesh" (Jer. xl. 5). Was not an *evil* spirit sent from thee to Saul, as mentioned in 1 Sam. xvi. 14, 15, and xviii. 10? Didst thou not often repent of the *evil* thou didst intend to do, as narrated in Ex. xxxii. 15; Jer. xviii. 8, Josh. ii. 13, Jonah iii. 10, and other passages?

Now, Jehovah, if these are all *true*, are we not justified in thinking that thou art the source and author of evil, and that it could have had no existence save by thee and from thee?

May we then again ask thee why thou didst ever create evil? Didst thou know the endless antagonism that must ever exist between thee and it, or *him*? Was it thy desire to have a deadly foe that should ever oppose thy purposes and thwart thy fondest plans? Didst thou know before hand that thou wert getting up an adversary that would utterly defeat the enterprise thou hadst long contemplated

and from which thou hadst anticipated grand results—one who should cause undescribable woe to thy offspring?

If thou didst not know this, does it not prove that thy knowledge was limited and that thy ability to foreknow results has been greatly overestimated? Does it not absolutely circumscribe thy knowledge and thy power?

If thou didst know all this before hand, and of all the miseries that would inevitably flow from the creation of *evil*, does it not greatly detract from thy goodness, thy mercy, and conclusively prove that instead of being all kindness, love, and benignancy, thou also dost possess in an immense degree, cruelty, malice and hatred? Could a being all goodness create a *devil* all evil and vile, and whom the creator knew would cause unhappiness, pain, and utter and endless wretchedness to countless billions of unfortunate, weak and helpless mortals? Is the Devil—bad as he is represented—any worse, or as bad, as the being who knowingly and purposely created him?

Is it not the most charitable view we can take of the matter, that if thou didst create evil or the Devil, that it was by accident, or that the affair worked very different from thy original intention; that thou didst design the Devil to be a good being, and he turned out to be a very bad being?

Then, again, is it possible for a being, originally perfectly good, to become perfectly evil? Can *good* change into *evil*? Could a being perfectly good be the author of a being perfectly evil?

Wilt thou inform us how long it was after the Devil was created a being of perfect and exalted goodness, that he rebelled against thee, and tried to circumvent thee, and upset all thy plans and enterprises? Didst thou make the Devil long before thou didst create man and woman? and if so, didst thou and he amicably associate together, or were heaven and hell already created and presided over respectively by thyself and the Devil?

Was the Devil originally made in the form of a serpent, as Genesis represents, or was Milton more correct in the supposition that the Devil was originally an archangel of high degree, and who stood near thy throne and nearly equaled thee in power and glory?

Was Milton correct in saying that Lucifer incited a rebellion in heaven against thy rule and authority, and inaugurated a cruel but bloodless war, and did he and Michael, the commander-in-chief of all thy forces, hurl mountains at each other until Lucifer, afterwards called Satan, was hurled, heels over head, from the beautiful land of heaven, and cast, with all his subordinate generals and numerous forces, to the lurid, sulphureous regions of hell?

If Satan, after his rebellion and defeat, became thy deadly enemy, and thou didst possess infinite power and couldst do anything that thou hadst a will to do, why didst thou not, in the language of Gerald Massey, *kill the Devil*, and thus put an end to the unlimited mischief which he has been committing for thousands of years? If he is immortal, and therefore cannot be killed, then why dost thou not keep him closely confined, so he cannot roam over the earth, among the children of men, only to allure them into wickedness and sin, and to lead them into everlasting wretchedness and woe? Would it not be vastly better if he could be closely confined forever?

If thou hast the power to do this, and yet refuse to abbreviate his liberty and his power for mischief, does it not imply that thou dost wish him to do just what he is doing, and that he is, in fact, carrying out thy divine will? If thou canst prevent the great wrong he is doing, and will not, art thou not virtually guilty of whatever evil he may commit? Dost thou not share with him in all that he does?

If thou wouldst destroy the Devil and his works, and yet he is not destroyed, does it not prove that thou hast not infinite power and infinite goodness, and that he at least is equal to thee in shrewdness and power?

In fact, to take the history of man in the past, and as he exists to-day upon the earth, is not the Devil proving himself more powerful than thou? Is he not wielding a far greater influence in the world than thou? Is he not drawing ten, fifty, even one hundred human beings after him whilst thou art getting one? Do not his tactics, subtlety, and principles rule the world far more than thine, and is he not gaining upon thee every day? Is not the probability very strong that he will ultimately bring the whole world

under his control, and that he will, in fact, become the great Almighty?

If the story in Genesis is the true one, that Satan was originally a snake, and that in the start-out he was immensely inferior to thee, has he not succeeded remarkably well, to so easily frustrate thy plans, and to prove himself more than equal to thee in strategy, generalship, and ability?

Is it really true that that snake in Eden, which beguiled our grandmother Eve, actually used human speech, and spoke with the organs of human voice? Or was he like the animals created by the inventive genius of Æsop, which also spoke the language of man? Is not the snake story of Eden equally as much a fable as anything that Æsop ever wrote?

If, however, it is not a fable, but absolutely true, as the world has long been taught to believe; that the serpent proved more than a match for thee and caused thee, for thousands of years, an incomputable amount of trouble and vexation, hast thou not many times had occasion to regret that thou ever didst create him? As we have numerous statements that thou didst repent of what thou hadst done, was there anything in all thy works one-millionth part so bad as the creation of a Devil to lead nearly all the inhabitants of the earth down to hell? Is there anything in all thou hast done so fit to be repented of, to be disgusted with, and even to be ashamed of?

Is it not true that there has been at various times, and is now, an amicable understanding between thee and Satan, and is not the antagonism between thee and him more apparent and pretended than real? Is not this made clear by the fact that thou and he met together on a certain occasion and held friendly intercourse and entered into a treaty together touching the afflictions to be visited upon the person, family, and property of thy goodly servant Job? Was it not made apparent on another occasion, when two persons writing thy word and narrating how thy servant David came to number the children of Israel on a certain occasion, one writer stating it was Satan who moved David thus to act, while the other said it was thee, both, of course, speaking truly?

According to the grand Christian system of theology, does not the Devil play as conspicuous a part as thyself ? Besides being very helpful in the fall of man and in his various temptations, did he not also play as conspicuous a part in his redemption, by assisting in putting thy son to death on the cross, whereby a diminutive portion of mankind are saved, and does he not faithfully carry out thy stern behests by punishing and tormenting for thee, to all eternity, the quintillions of the unfortunate wretches not saved by thy son's blood ? In fact is he not thy partner or agent in the entire programme ?

Would not our system of theology be utterly defective and abortive were it not for the Devil ? Is he not a central figure in the grand scheme, and in the grand machinery, and should he not, in fairness and justice, be accorded a place in the Trinity or rather the *Quadrinity* ? And being decidedly more industrious and more successful and more powerful than any other known being, should not the first place in the firm be justly given him ?

After all, Jehovah, has not a great error all along been made in the nature of *good* and *evil*? Is it not a mistake that either of them are persons or beings, or that one is created by the other ? Are not the theological conceptions of the personality of good and evil the mere outgrowths of the crude notions held by man in primitive times when a god or a demon was believed to be stationed in nearly every forest, every glen, every stream, every cascade, every breeze, every storm ; in the ocean, in the mountains, in the thunder, in the lightning, in the sun, the moon, the stars, the day, the night, the four seasons of the year, in short in nearly every change and phenomenon of nature ?

Is not the Devil of Jewish and Christian mythology a close imitation of the evil deity—the god of darkness and opposition—of the ancient heathen nations ? Did not the religions of the Hindoos, the Chaldeans, the Egyptians, the Grecians, and many other nations, thousands of years ago, before the Christians or the Hebrews, recognize an evil or destructive god or devil, as Siva, Ahriman, Ravana, Typho, Pluto, etc. ?

Are not *good* and *evil* merely relative terms ? Are not all

substances, all elements, all combinations, all qualities, all impulses, all passions even, *good*, when in their proper use and place, and are they not all capable of becoming *evils* when out of place or improperly employed? Are not order and adaptation *good*, and are not disorder and inadaptation *evil*? Are not these the origin and cause of evil? And is it not the great study and duty of man to learn to use all things so that they may be *good*, and nothing in a way to become an *evil*?

Great Jehovah, not wishing to dwell too long upon the subject of *evil*, and not wishing to be too inquisitive upon the matter, may we ask if Satan, or the Devil, has not been basely misrepresented as to the effects upon the human race produced by his connection with what has been called the fall of man? Did that incentive to experimental knowledge, said to have been induced by him, tend to throw man down from a lofty height, or did it not rather serve to elevate him from the state of ignorance he was previously in?

If man had little or no knowledge before his fall, if he knew not the nature of good and evil, if after partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge his eyes were opened to the extent that thou saidst, "Behold, the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and live forever," for which reason thou turnedst him out of the garden to procure his own living, was not his mental condition improved? Did he not rise from a state of ignorance to one of knowledge? Was not his fall *up*, rather than *down*?

We would again ask, was not Satan's agency in that little business beneficial to mankind? Did he not on many occasions show commendable qualities of character, and has he not uniformly, for thousands of years, been remarkably free from the bad qualities and defects of character attendant upon many other equally mythical personages?

As greatly as Satan has been maligned, has he exhibited a revengeful or malicious disposition? Has he shown himself fond of cruelty, vengeance, and slaughter? Has he slain or destroyed the human race by the tens of thousands, fifties of thousands, and hundreds of thousands? Though he has been charged with being mischievous and tricky, has

he shown malevolence, vindictiveness, or blood-thirstiness?

As great as the Devil's power has been in the world, has he ever sent upon mankind earthquakes, storms of fire, hurricanes, tornadoes, cyclones, floods, drouths, famine, pestilence, wars, slaughters, butcheries, massacres, atrocities, assassinations, shipwrecks, destruction of life, property, etc.? On the other hand, have not these dreadful phenomena and outrages been considered by thy people as special agencies of thine own? And hast thou not often employed them?

Did the Devil ever command that women and innocent little children should be put to death in cold blood by the thousands and tens of thousands? Is there any proof that he ever laid any plan by which to bring wretchedness and destitution upon any part of the human race?

Has Satan ever demolished a city, a nation, a village, a hamlet? Has he ever destroyed armies, regiments, companies, or has he even caused the death of a single individual? Hast thou not done all these things on many occasions?

Has he ever laid plans to cut off or afflict the inhabitants of the earth? Did he ever devise a scheme by which his own beloved son (if he ever had such a relative) should be cruelly and ingloriously put to death?

Does the Devil ever get angry, and storm and rave, and curse, and threaten to send fearful calamities and dire afflictions upon the children of men? Does he not, rather, maintain an equable frame of mind, and is he not pretty free from jealousy, selfishness, fury and vindictiveness?

Upon the whole, has he not proved himself to be a pretty good sort of an individual, and has he not been more of a friend than enemy to the human race? Has he not been accused of being the author of most of the innovations and inventions that have proved a benefit to mankind? Has he not been a friend to schools and institutions of learning? Has he done aught to obstruct the free pursuit of knowledge and science? Has he ever tried to suppress education among the people, and to keep them ignorant and degraded? Did not thy priests pursue that course for centuries?

Has not the Devil been persistently denounced as the author of the art of printing and making books? Was not that art for a long time classed among the *black arts*, and

did not the priesthood make persistent efforts to suppress it? Has not the printing press—the general spread of intelligence among the masses—done more to elevate the human race than all the dogmas and creeds and superstitions and falsehoods that prophets and priests have ever originated? Has any prophet or priest or monk in former ages ever been accused of inventing the printer's art, or of taking any special measures for educating the masses of the people?

Was it not the leaders and rulers of the church, a few centuries ago, who pronounced against education for the common people, and stigmatized the printing press as an invention of the Devil? Have not the instigations of priests on many occasions led to the destruction of books, libraries, and schools of learning? If the Devil has been the patron of schools and education, and the printing of books, should he not be justly regarded as one of the fastest and truest friends to the human race?

If Satan and the Serpent were *one* in the beginning, and thou didst condemn him to crawl upon his belly for all coming time, and to eat dust, how is it that he was so soon able to walk upright upon the face of the earth, and has never been known to eat any dust whatever? Was not thy sentence thus disregarded and set aside?

How was it that this Satanic serpent was allowed to enter Noah's ark, when specimens of all animated creation are said to have stowed themselves in that capacious vessel? Should not Noah have been instructed to carefully keep that serpent out, that he might be destroyed by the flood, which he had made especially necessary? Could the instigator of evil have been drowned in that flood, would it not have been a praiseworthy execution, and would it not have made compensation for the vast sacrifice of human and animal life made upon that occasion?

Was not the transformation which Satan made from the time thou didst curse him to crawl upon his belly all the days of his life, to the time when he met with thy sons and presented himself in a gentlemanly manner before thee, as mentioned in the Book of Job? When thou didst enter into that arrangement with Satan to afflict and vex that good

man, didst thou not treat Satan much more like a friend and an equal than as a deadly enemy? Wert thou not somewhat mistaken in him? Hadst thou regarded him as the most deadly foe to all that is good couldst thou have entered into that wager or that treaty with him to so misuse the most excellent Job? Shouldst thou have permitted him to lift a finger against that patient, long-suffering man?

Was it not pretty hard on poor Job to be thus made a subject of experimental cruelty between Satan and thyself to test the matter whether the good man, in the extremity of his afflictions, would curse thee or not? Was the bargain which thou madest with Satan in reference to Job just such an one as might be expected between a God and his most devilish foe? Has it never occurred to thee that thy treatment of that patient, righteous man on that occasion—and merely to disprove a whim of the Devil—was most unjust and cruel? Canst thou think strange if the story is regarded as highly improbable, and that the conduct described in it was wholly unworthy of thee?

Jehovah, we would ask thee, was there not a great mistake made in the Genesaical account of the creation of the world, of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, and of man, both as to time and manner? While the Bible represents that the whole business occurred less than six thousand years ago, is there not an abundance of incontrovertible proof in the records made upon the rocks forming the crust of the earth—which records are immensely more reliable than any conjectures or traditions that men may write in books—that this earth has been a revolving globe for hundreds of thousands of years, that vegetation has existed upon it more than one hundred thousand years, and that animal life, including man, has been abundant thereon more than ten times as long as the Bible represents?

In contradistinction to the Bible theory of man's debut and early condition upon the earth, is there not undeniable proof that the early condition of man was a low, savage state, a slight advance, only, above the animal kingdom? Have not the bones of man been found in caves where he formerly resided, side by side with huge animals that have long since disappeared from the earth, and of which the Bible gives no

account whatever? Have not deposits been made of drift and alluvial soil, in some places thirty feet in depth, caused by the cutting and washings of rivers and water-courses that must have been done at least thirty thousand years ago, and under which human bones have been found?

Has not abundance of evidence been found imbedded in the rocks, many feet below the surface, that man lived upon the earth many, many thousands of years ago? Is not what is called the "stone age," when men lived in a very crude state, and used implements exclusively of stone, and of the rudest kind, conclusively established? Have not their primitive implements, side by side with the bones of man, been found in many countries?

Is there not a mass of facts and data that cannot possibly be ignored nor set aside that man existed on the earth much farther back than any history extends; that he dwelt on this continent as well as in Asia, Europe, and Africa, long before any human records now existing were written? Is it not equally true that man primitively was a rude savage, but possessing the organization to generate intelligence, he has gradually evolved from the lower mental and social conditions up through the various grades of barbarism and semi-civilization until he has reached the status he at present occupies? Does it not follow, then, that the Bible story of the original perfect condition of man, from which he immediately fell into a low state of degradation, is a mere fable, devised in days of ignorance, that it is no longer worthy of the credence that has been given it, and that it is a very defective theory upon which to build the theology and the religious systems of an advanced, intellectual world?

Great Jehovah, let us turn from the consideration of *Evil* unto that which is *Good*; let us not have our attention longer taken up with thy great adversary, the Devil, but rather to meditate upon thee, Jehovah, whom we have long fondly looked up to as the author and source of good, and the hater and contemner of evil. We would know more of thee, more of thy personality, more of thy real nature, and more of the traits and attributes which form thy personal character. Feeling assured that thou wilt not be displeased at this desire on our part to become better acquaint-

ed with thee, we shall feel free to ask of thee upon all points concerning thyself.

First, as to thy name: are we not correct in thinking that the name by which we address thee, and by which thou long wert known by thy people—*Jehovah*—was not thy original name, but was adopted hundreds, if not thousands, of years after the children of men were taught concerning thee? Didst thou not say to Moses at the interview thou heldst with him, as recorded in Exodus, iii. 11-19: “I am the Lord; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by the name of *God Almighty*, but by my name, Jehovah, was I not known to them”? By this is it not clear that by the name of “Jehovah” Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all who lived before them, knew thee not, and that that name was not known in the world or among the gods of the earth until after Abraham & Co. had passed away?

Is there not good grounds, as we have before enquired of thee, for believing that thou wert exclusively the god of the Jewish nation; that thou wast known to them only, and that no other nation of the earth knew aught of thee? Didst thou hold communion with any other nation or make thyself known to them in any way? Couldst thou not with propriety have been considered a local or a national god only, whose care, anxiety, attention, watchfulness, affection and love were principally expended upon that one particular people? Hadst thou been the presiding deity of the vast Universe, and also of the numerous nations on this earth, wouldst thou have shown the special care, the circumscribed interest, and the limited attention which was so marked in thy treatment of the Jews and other contemporaneous nations? As Brahma was properly called the Hindoo god; as Ormuzd was styled the Persian or the Chaldean god; as Baal was the god of the Syrians and the Phœnicians; as Fohi was specially the god of the Chinese; as Osiris was the god of the Egyptians; as Zeus and Jupiter were the gods of the Greeks and Romans; as Allah was called the god of the Arabians and the Mohammedans; as Thor was the god of the Norsemen and the Scandinavians; as Hesus was the god of the Druids; as numerous other nations had their special or national gods—all different characters and per-

sonages—wert thou not, Jehovah, distinctively and exclusively the god of the Jews? Didst thou show much affection or friendship for other nations than the Jews? Does not this fact tend greatly to narrow and contract the glory, the grandeur, the universal power and presence, that otherwise would attach to thee? As all the gods the world has known were assigned a special domain and reign over particular nations, wert thou in any way an exception to this rule; and wert thou not equally circumscribed and limited in thy rule and province?

May we enquire, Jehovah, somewhat of thy personal form and appearance? Did not thy duly commissioned prophets and writers describe thee truly and portray thee correctly? If we wish to know the form in which thou existed, and the appearance which thou presented, have we any better authority by which to gauge our opinions than the description given of thee in thine own word?

As thou saidst when thou madest man thou madest him “in thy own image and in thy own likeness,” are we not clearly to understand that thy form is like unto that of a man? As man has legs, arms, body, head, mouth, nose, ears, eyes, hands, and feet, can we be mistaken in concluding that thou also hast arms, legs, body, head, mouth, nose, ears, eyes, hands, and feet, and every other part and organ that man possesses, who was fashioned after thee?

If this personal form, this anthropomorphic shape, with parts and organs, is true of thee, does it not tend to make it inconvenient for thee to be in ten thousand, yes, millions of places at once and countless billions of miles apart? If whilst thou remainst on the earth and findst it equally necessary to be personally present in the countless fixed stars and worlds, does it not severely strain portions of thy person and parts to be present in so many widely different worlds at one and the same time? If thy head, for instance, is in that far-distant world, Alcyone, thy body in the solar system, one hand in the Milky Way, one in Capella, thy feet in the belt of Orion, what portions of thy body are in Sirius, in the constellation of Virgo, or the North Pole Star and the Great Bear? Is there not a great confusion of ideas in regarding thee as a person having parts and organs, and

at the same time an omnipresent spirit, filling immensity, everywhere?

As a delineation of thy personal appearance and characteristics can we not take as authoritative such descriptions of thee as appear in the following passages: "There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it." "And he rode upon a cherub and did fly, and he was seen upon the wings of the wind." "Through the brightness before him were coals of fire kindled"? (2 Sam. xxii. 9, 11, 13.)

Didst thou have horns coming out of thy hand, wherein was the holding of thy power, as stated by the prophet Habakkuk (chap. iii. 4)? And didst thou "march through the land in indignation and thresh the heathen in anger" (Hab. iii. 12.)? Did out of thy "mouth proceed a sharp two-edged sword," as stated in Rev. i. 16, and xix. 15? From the frequent mention made in thy word of thy mouth, thy arms, thy feet, thy face, thy eyes, thy voice, thy hands, etc., can we have a reasonable doubt that thou didst possess all these parts the same as a man? Do we not also learn by thy word that thou also hadst bowels or intestines and that they moved and yearned? If five thousand years ago thou hadst these bodily parts like human beings, hast thou not the same to-day?

In reading thy word, Jehovah, are we not forced to the conclusion that in ancient times thou wert extremely fond of fighting, of war, and of bloodshed? And for this reason wert thou not often styled the "God of War," "the God of Battles," "the Lord of Hosts," etc.? Did it give thee pleasure to see human blood flow upon the earth, and didst thou really delight in taking a hand in terrible slaughters? Didst thou not delight in acting the part of a general over thy forces? If that was thy character once, is it not the same to-day?

The world has long delighted to regard thee as a being of kindness, compassion, affection, and love to all men, and that we may be able to reconcile these traits to the record given of thee, permit us to allude to some of the points contained in that record: Was it *kindness* that prompted thee when thou wouldest have thy chosen people leave the land of

Egypt, to repeatedly harden the heart of Pharaoh so that he would not let the people depart? Was it *love* that caused thee thus to harden the king's heart, and in consequence bring upon the unoffending people, who had no hand in the hardening process or in Pharaoh's obstinacy, a long train of ills, of plagues, of sufferings, of calamities and of death? Was it *justice* to make the innocent suffer in the place of the guilty? Was it justice and honesty that prompted thee to induce the Israelites to defraud the Egyptians out of their jewelry, ornaments, and wearing apparel, by instructing them to *borrow* those articles, when thou knewst they would never return them?

If thy paternal love is equal for the entire human race, was it manifested when thou didst part the Red Sea to let a favored nation pass over, and caused the waters to return in time to overwhelm and drown another nation?

Was it *love* for the human family that made thee urge a nation thou hadst chosen as thy own, to wage wars of slaughter and extermination against other nations, modeled equally after thy form, and bearing equally thy likeness?

Was it an instance of thy parental love for all thy earthly children that caused thee to send the warriors of Israel against the peaceable and inoffensive people of Midian, slaying them utterly by the sword, and murdering in cold blood many thousands of women and children, retaining thirty-two thousand young virgins for the use of the murderous soldiers who massacred their fathers, their mothers, and their brothers?

Has any being, natural or supernatural, human or inhuman, real or imaginary, ever evinced greater cruelty or injustice? May we ask, here, what use thou couldst make of the thirty-two virgins who were allotted to thee when the division was made? Did not the priests make use of them in thy stead?

Was it thy mercy and equal love to all men that caused thee to thus say to thy chosen people, when speaking to them in Deuteronomy, vii., of the seven nations which they were to conquer and subdue: "And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them: thou shalt make no covenant with

them, nor show mercy unto them"? Didst thou not frequently command thy people to "save alive nothing that breathed"? Do such commands indicate the tender love of a heavenly father toward all his children? Did not such instructions tend to make thy chosen people merciless, blood-thirsty, and cruel?

Was it beneficence, kindness, and divine justice that caused thee to issue this command: "When thou comest nigh unto a city, to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make the answer of peace, and open unto thee, then shall it be that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace to thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it. And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands: thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword. But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof shalt thou take unto thyself. And thou shalt eat of the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. This shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee"? (Deut. xx. 10-15) Can thy order relative to those unfortunate cities be considered fatherly and kind? On the other hand wert thou not oppressive and unmerciful? If that is *divine* justice, is it not inferior to the *human* variety?

Was it a proof of the loveliness of thy character when thou saidst thou wouldest "visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation"? Is it really divine justice to punish children for what their grandfathers and their great-grandfathers did? If it is, would it not be equally just to continue the punishment to the thirtieth, fortieth, and fiftieth generations?

Was it this kind of justice that impelled thee to command Saul to "go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and sucking, ox and sheep, camel and ass" for the offenses their ancestors had committed four hundred years before? (1 Sam., xv. 3.) Could the pagan Nero have uttered a more cruel edict than this? Could the Seminole,

the Modoc, or the Apache Indians be any more unfeeling and blood-thirsty?

Because Saul had the humanity, and saw fit to save alive some of the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and of the lambs, and spared even the life of Agag the king, did it make thee angry and cause thee to repent that thou hadst ever made him king over Israel? Didst thou for this take thy good spirit from him and send an evil spirit in its place? Were the sheep, the oxen, the lambs, and the fatlings to blame for what the Amalekites had done four hundred years previous, that every one shculd mercilessly be put to death? Were they not just as innocent as the same kind of animals raised by the Israelites? Was thy anger allayed, and did it produce a peaceful effect upon thy mind when the little children and sucklings, the lambs and the fatlings were put to death, and their blood saturated the earth? May we ask in this connection, how it was possible, when every man, woman and child of the Amalekites were put to death, that in a very few years the same nation was able to wage war again with the Israelites, and to wrest Ziklag from their possession? Is there not an inconsistency about this story difficult for a natural-minded man to reconcile with common possibilities?

Great Jehovah, let us know more of thy excellent ways, and teach us of thy mercies and loving kindness. We would not tire thee with our importunities, but we would ask still more of thee.

Shall we regard the commands thou gavest (Deut., xiii.) in reference to those who were persuaded to offer service to other gods, as evidence of thy kindness and long-suffering? "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' . . . thou shalt not consent unto him nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him; but thou shalt surely kill him; thy hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones that he die." And afterwards, "Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of

that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword." Can it be that these orders really emanated from thee, a God of mercy, love, and justice? or are we not justified in believing that thou hast been greatly misrepresented, and that these cruel incentives proceeded rather from the barbarous nature of the Israelites, and that they have been unjustly laid to thy charge?

Didst thou act to the extent of thy mercy when Korah, Dathan and Abiram fomented a rebellion against the rule of Moses, while thy people were passing through the wilderness, and Moses and thyself got extremely angry, and thou causedst the earth to open its mouth and swallow those men and their adherents, and when thou immediately didst send a fire from thyself that consumed two hundred and fifty more of them? Were the two hundred and fifty to blame for what those had done who were swallowed up? Couldst thou not have affected the hearts of that people without using such heroic measures and causing such destruction of life? Didst thou set much value upon human life? Has the earth any particular mouth which it opens to swallow people? By thy not often adopting the opening of the earth's mouth to swallow people when they offend thee are we not warranted in thinking that thou dost not approve of that mode of destroying them? Was the fire employed on that occasion, and which came from thee, anywise different from ordinary fire when any substance is consumed? As fire is the act of combustion, and as whenever fire exists someting *burns*, may we ask, what was the fuel employed when the two hundred and fifty were burned? Was it the same kind of fire as that which thou sent, on a previous occasion upon the cities of the plain—Sodom and Gomorrah—when vast numbers were destroyed with thy fire? Was not brimstone an accompaniment of the fire in the case of the two cities? Was it the same when the two hundred and fifty were consumed?

Was thy anger excited to a greater degree on the following day, when thou sentst a plague of more fire among the people and caused the death of nearly fifteen thousand in a short time? Did not the device of Moses on that occasion,

of heading off thy work of destruction by placing Aaron with a censer containing incense and fire in among the congregation, save the lives of a vast number of people? If Aaron had not taken a stand with a censer between the dead and the living, would not the destruction of life on that occasion have been far greater? Was it not most fortunate for the masses not destroyed by thee on that day, that Moses bethought himself in time to place his brother with his censer in thy way so as to regale thee with a pleasant odor, and thus to change thy wrath into amiability, thereby saving the lives of many thousands? If the number destroyed had been one hundred and fifty thousand, would it not have been much worse for the people? Would not that number have easily been reached, but for the sweet odors from Aaron's censer? Did not the odor of the burning incense affect thy olfactory nerves, so as to remove thy anger? Does burning incense always have this effect upon thee? Art thou still fond of those good smells?

Are we not to understand, Jehovah, that thy tastes, habits, and temper are unchangeable? In contradistinction to this, didst thou not often shew fickleness of character, impatience, and impetuosity? Didst thou not often change thy mind? Have we not many instances of thy change of feeling, and of thy regretting what thou hadst done? Didst thou not regret that thou hadst made man? (Gen. vi., 6.) Didst thou not repent of the evil thou thoughtst to do to thy people on the occasion of Aaron's making the golden calf, at the time when Moses and thyself were getting up the Ten Commandments on the tables of stone? (Ex. xxxii. 14.) When thy angel stretched out his hand against Jerusalem to destroy it (2 Sam. xxiv. 16), didst thou not repent of the harm thou thoughtst to do on that occasion? Didst thou not repent because of the groanings of thy people, when, after the death of Joshua, thy anger was hot against Israel, and thou didst deliver them into the hands of the spoilers? (Judges ii, 14 and 18.) Didst thou not repent that thou hadst made Saul king? (1 Sam. xv., 35.) Couldst thou not tell beforehand what the result of the appointment would be? Does not the very statement that thou didst at any time repent of what thou hadst done tacitly admit that thou couldest not

foretell certain results that would follow certain conditions, and that, per consequence, thy knowledge was limited? Does not the Psalmist say: "The Lord repenteth according to his mercies"? (Ps. civ, 45.) Didst thou not repent of the evil thou hadst promised against thy people in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah? (Jer. xxvi., 19.) According to the prophet Amos, didst thou not repent? (Amos vii., 3.) Didst thou not repent of the evil thou saidst thou wouldest do unto the people of Nineveh? (Jonah iii., 10.) According to thy prophet Joel, didst thou not repent? (Joel ii., 13.) Did not Moses say thou shouldst repent? (Deut. xxxvii, 36.) Did not the Psalmist again say thou wouldest repent? (Ps. cxxxv, 14) Did not thy prophet Jeremiah say for thee on several occasions that thou wouldest repent? (Jer. xviii., 18 - xxvi., 13; xxvi., 3; xxiii., 10 and other places.)

Is anger, fierce or mild, really one of thy attributes? Should we not regard thee, rather, as a person or principle never subject to fits of passion, frenzy, wrath, or anger? Is not anger a state of mind only suited to finite, imperfect beings, or those slightly progressed in the habit of self-control? Have we not, nevertheless, numerous instances where thou didst indulge in anger and seemed to be quite as much addicted to it as the most passionate, impetuous man that ever lived? Is not thy *anger*, thy *fierce anger*, and the *anger of the Lord*, spoken of as an actual existence in many scores of places in thy word? In fact, is not *anger*, as an attribute of thine, spoken of as frequently by thy prophets and thy servants, and with as much positiveness as thy love or thy mercy? Was not thy anger *stirred up* and thy vengeance aroused at hundreds of provocations and on hundreds of occasions? Didst thou not send judgments and punishments upon thy children quite as often as thou didst blessings and rewards? Is not the *anger of the Lord* spoken of in Numbers xxv., 4; xxxii., 14; in Deuteronomy xxix., 20; in Judges ii., 14; iii., 8; in 2 Kings xxiv., 20; in Jeremiah iv., 8; xii., 13; xxv., 37; xxiii., 20; xxx., 24; li., 45; in Lamentations iv., 16; in Zephaniah ii., 2 and ii., 3? Is not thy anger being *kindled* and *provoked*, and of its *waxing hot* mentioned by nearly every writer in the Bible, and by many of them frequently? Did not the Psalmist even say that thou

wert angry every day? From all this testimony are we not led to believe that much of thy time was spent in anger? Is not anger thy normal condition, or one of thy normal conditions? In the face of all thy word contains about thy anger being kindled, and thy fierce anger being stirred up, what are we to do with the positive declaration in another part of thy word (*Eccl. vii., 9*) "Anger resteth in the bosom of fools"? Has this truism any application to thyself?

May we enquire, does not anger produce an unpleasant effect upon thee, as it does upon mortals? Does not a fit of passion or a feeling of vengeance produce an unhappy state of mind, which a god, or even a man, should wish to avoid? If anger is wrong for a man to indulge in, is it right for a god? Does not the very act of *repentance* prove that the repenter is a changeable being, that he cannot perceive consequences and results; that he is finite and limited? Are we to suppose that a being of infinite knowledge and power could ever have occasion to repent of his own conduct or change his mind and opinion upon any subject? Is not the very admission that thou didst ever repent, derogatory to thy greatness, thy knowledge, thy boundless supremacy, thy immensity, thy almighty ness?

But as there are so many instances where it is positively stated that thou didst repent, is it not rather confusing to be as positively told in other places that thou didst not? Does it not say in *Numbers, xxiii., 19*, "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent"? In *1 Samuel xv., 20*, does it not also say that thou wilt neither lie nor repent? and that thou art not a man that thou shouldst repent? By these passages is it not evident that repenting is strictly a human action, a human quality or function, and that God never repents? Must we not conclude that a repenting God is one of limited capacity, knowledge, and power? Can we conclude that the *Great First Cause*, the source of all things, all worlds, all existences, all life, is subject to regrets, and that he repents on one day of what he did on a previous day? That his mind and feelings change, that he is subject to impatience, anger, and fury, like an ungoverned child, or a person of insane mind?

Is it not wrong for men to fly into a fierce passion, or to let their anger be kindled toward their fellow creatures, or towards animals below them? Does not the indulgence of this practice induce dissatisfaction and unhappiness? Then, as like produces like, is it not to be presumed that gods are soured and made morose by yielding to the rule of a passion and being governed by fierce and burning anger? Would it not be better for them if always, under all circumstances, they preserved an equable frame of mind, and never gave way to fits of anger? Does it not belittle and demean any being or person to yield to outbursts of passion, and to be controlled by fierce anger, fury and wrath? Can love and anger rule in the same breast at the same time?

Hast thou not, Jehovah, changed in respect to getting angry and being governed by passion? Has not the great law of evolution worked with thee as with all else in the Universe? Art thou not less vengeful, less ferocious, less impatient, less angry, and more merciful, more loving, and more forbearing than in olden times? In other words, have not men's conceptions of thee undergone a great change? Were not the old views entertained of thee the outgrowth of the age of savageism and crudity in which they existed, and as the world progresses in intelligence, civilization, and refinement, do not men's ideas of an angry God become greatly modified and softened? May we not expect that the God of the future will be very amiable, very placid, and very inoffensive, leaving the Universe to be governed by its own laws, and for natural effects to be solely the results of natural causes?

Great Jehovah, canst thou think it strange that we love to meditate on thy kindness, thy mercy, thy clemency, and thy paternal goodness? Let us again turn and further consider thy beneficence as described in thy own word. When thy people were making their forty years' journey from Egypt to Canaan, a distance of a few hundred miles, and very naturally tired of the monotonous manna diet, and murmured somewhat, did it not make thee angry? The record says (Numbers xi., 1): "When the people complained it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it, and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them

and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp." Was it strange that they craved some other kind of food besides manna? Was it not rather severe to send fire among them and consume them, because they longed for meat and vegetables? Was it singular or criminal in them, that they remembered the flesh, and the cucumbers, and melons, the onions and leeks that they used to enjoy in Egypt? Was it strange that the heart of Moses was troubled when he heard the complainings of the people, and that he asked thee to remove him from the earth, and not condemn him to hear the murmurings of the entire host of Israel?

Was it not kindness in thee that induced thee to promise the people flesh? Didst thou not say, "Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days; neither ten days, nor twenty days, but even a whole month"? Was it not because thou wert touched at their hungerings and destitution that caused a wind to go forth from thee which brought quails from the sea, which fell upon the camp and covered the ground two cubits deep, or nearly four feet, and a day's journey, or thirty miles, perhaps, in every direction? Can it not easily be supposed that thy love and pity were excited in an unusual degree, to provide such a superabundance of quail meat? What, then, are we to think of thy kindness, when, after the people had worked two days and a night at gathering and preparing these quails, and when they had taken the flesh into their mouths, but before they had even chewed it, thou didst smite them with a "very great plague," so that large numbers of them died. Was this a specimen of thy kindness, also? Was this fulfilling thy promise that they should have flesh for a month, in thus rendering it impossible for them to chew it, or swallow it, even after they had taken it into their mouths? Was it thy love or thy anger that governed thee at that moment?

Jehovah, didst thou not rather overdo the quail business, anyway? Hadst thou produced a one hundredth part of the quantity at a time, say half a mile out from the camp each way, and a single cubit in depth, would it not have been an abundance for one occasion, and would not the total supply have lasted the people much longer? Would it have been more labor for thee to have arranged it in that way? Would

not a reasonable supply of quails, furnished regularly, have been an agreeable and healthy change of diet for thy people? Wast thou not almost sorry afterwards, and didst thou not repent a little that thou wast so hasty and rash as to destroy, in an unguarded moment, all those nice quails, and that thou killedst so many of thy own people for simply wanting them? If any earthly prince or ruler should act in that way towards his subjects, would he not be justly considered one of the most cruel tyrants that ever lived? Would he not be truthfully regarded as utterly devoid of kindness and affection? Would it have interfered with thy own happiness hadst thou seen them cheerfully partaking and enjoying the quails which thou sentest them?

Was not, the sea a singular direction to bring those quails from? Were they really salt-water quails, and were they produced in the sea? If that was so, is it not more probable that they were a species of fish—perhaps flying fish? Did thy present of the quails, or fish, or whatever they were, including the accompanying plague, cure thy people of their appetite for flesh so that they hungered no more for it? Had they not reason, even, to quail before thee?

Wert thou in a specially amiable mood on the occasion when the ark—a chest some four feet long and thirty inches wide, and the same in depth, which thou didst order to be made as a special residence for thyself—was sent from Ekron to Beth-shemesh on a new cart, drawn by new-milch cows just separated from their calves, and without a driver, and when one man among the fifty thousand men and over, who came out of a neighboring harvest-field to give thee a fitting reception after having been so long separated from them whilst thou wert sojourning with the Philistines, upon just raising the lid of the ark thou smotest with death fifty thousand and seventy men, by actual count? Was that a specimen of thy kindness and justice, upon thy return to thine own people?

If one man was culpable in raising the lid for which he deserved death, were the fifty thousand and sixty-nine others also guilty for what the one did? If they were not guilty of his act, was it not a little rough upon them to kill them for it? Dost thou consider it divine justice to kill or

punish people for the offenses others have committed? Have not thy actions often been governed in accordance with this principle? Did not the sudden death of over fifty thousand men necessitate a pretty large funeral to be attended to in harvest time? Would it not have been better for the people, especially those slain, hadst thou remained longer with the Philistines? Did not thy presence on that occasion prove a curse to thy people?

Was it not a similar feeling—though in a lesser degree—that actuated thee on a subsequent occasion, when thy favorite servant David called out thirty thousand men to move thy dwelling—the ark aforesaid—from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem, and when upon the route as the cart was passing over a section of rough road, a well-meaning man by the name of Uzzah, thinking there was danger of the ark falling off, and, perhaps, of thy sustaining an injury, put forth his hand to steady the ark, when thou didst smite him with death? Was it not a severe requital for good intentions? Was he in danger of doing thee an injury by putting his hand toward the ark? If not, why didst thou become offended at him and kill him? Does it not afford thee pleasure to reward good intentions rather than to inflict punishment for them? If every person who commits an offense no greater than Uzzah's should be punished as severely, would there be a man or woman alive upon the earth to-day? How, then, can we understand that thou art always the same, without variableness or change or shadow of turning?

Jehovah, was it kindness and goodness in thee that caused thee to slay seventy thousand men of thy people because David, the man after thine own heart, decided to number his subjects? Is taking a census of the population such a crime that seventy thousand men should die to pay the penalty? Were the seventy thousand men to blame for what David did? Had they any hand in causing him to take the census? If they had not, could there be any sort of justice in putting them to death for it? Was it not, in fact, sheer injustice and wrong to put so many people to death for a performance they had nothing in the world to do with? Was not David more merciful and just than thyself, when he saw thy angel carrying out thy orders and committing the work

of destruction in smiting thy people, to say, "Lo, I have sinned and I have done wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done? Let thy hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house"? Did he not correctly see the great injustice of punishing "those sheep," for his particular conduct? Was he not far more merciful than his God? Should God be excelled in mercy by man?

In this connection may we again recur to the single point as to who it was that induced David to number the people, that we may be the better able to decide who the guilty party was? In 2 Samuel xxiv., 1. it says: "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." But in 1 Chronicles xxi., 1, where the same event is narrated, it says: "And Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel." Now, Jehovah, wilt thou help us to understand this positive contradiction? Are we not to understand that both passages are equally thy word, and both true and infallible? If this is so, art not thou and Satan the same personage? and though a seeming opposition is kept up, and a bitter conflict simulated between you, that you really are one and the same being, possessing one intent and one purpose? If this is not so, does not one of those passages state a falsehood? Can both be true upon any other basis save that thou and Satan are one?

If, however, we take the first statement to be true, that it was thou who caused David to have the people numbered, wast it just and god-like in thee to get angry about it and put seventy thousand persons to death for it, who were entirely innocent of the whole business? If it was godlike, was it just and righteous? If Nero, Caligula, Herod, Heliogabulus, Pope Alexander VI., Philip II., John Calvin, Cotton Mather, Osceola of the Seminoles, or Capt. Jack of the Modocs, had caused seventy thousand people to be put to death for an act which they had not committed, would they not have been justly counted as monsters and fiends incarnate? If it would be cruel and villainous for a king, or any other man, to perform an act of this kind, is it right and just and merciful when a god is the author of it? Is it proper for a god to perform any cruel act that would be un-

just for a man to commit? Ought not a god, rather, to be as much above man in the uprightness of his conduct as he is supposed to be superior to him in intelligence and power? Ought there not, in fact, to be no semblance of wrong or injustice in a god?

If the second statement is the true one—that it was Satan who caused David to number the people—was it not extremely shabby and rascally in him, if he knew that in consequence thou wouldest get so angry as to slay seventy thousand innocent persons for it? Would it not, in fact, have been one of the most fiendish tricks of which he has ever been accused? Has the Devil ever committed a worse act than that? But even if he was guilty of inciting David to take a census, was it as bad as doing the killing? While there is a conflict of statement as to who moved David, is there any dispute or doubt as to who caused the death of the seventy thousand? If, again, it was thee who caused David to order the numbering to be done, does it not present thyself in an extremely unfavorable light? Could any act easily be baser than for a being to cause any given act to be performed, and then to turn around and slay numerous thousands of people for that very act? Even if thou wert angry with the children of Israel to begin with, and wished for a good excuse to put a large number of them to death, does it not then have an extremely bad look to cause a certain act to be performed, and then make that an excuse for putting innocent people to death?

In the narrative it says that after David had numbered the people, his heart smote him for the offense he had committed, and that he cried out to thee for forgiveness for the wrong he had done, when thou gavest him his choice between seven years' famine, three months' defeat from his enemies, or three days of pestilence in the land. Now, if it wast thou who moved him to number the people, why should his conscience have smitten him for the act, and why shouldst thou visit either of the evils named upon him, when it was thou who caused all that was done? Does it not look as if thou didst want an excuse for putting a lot of people to death? Is not the duplicity of the act nearly as

repugnant to every sense of justice as the cruelty itself? Could a really good being act in that manner?

How, by the way, dost thou account for the discrepancy which exists between the two different versions of the result of that census-taking? In the first it says that the number of the valiant men who drew the sword in Israel was 800,000 men, and in Judah 500,000 men, while the second statement gives the number as 1,100,000 in Israel and 470,000 in Judah, showing a difference of 300,000 men in Israel and 30,000 in Judah. Are both of those statements correct? If the one is true, is not the other, necessarily, untrue? Is it not especially perplexing to find such disagreements in thy word, and is it not calculated to shake confidence in its trustworthiness? May we not be justified in supposing that the reason of thy anger was that such wide discrepancies had been made by the two different inspired writers? or may we conclude that in order to make both accounts correct, thou didst undertake to kill off the surplus in the second account, to make it agree with the figures of the first? May this all be called *the system of divine mathematics and mercy?*

Great Jehovah, feeling fully assured that thou wilt not be offended at our desire to know more of thee, we ask thee to permit us to continue our inquiries touching thy actions and purposes in the past, as displayed in thy word. We cannot think thou wouldest wish to hide from the humblest of thy children any of the labors which thou hast accomplished, or the motives which have governed thee.

Shall we regard it as a proof of thy kindness and loving mercy, that, on a former occasion, thou gavest as a law to thy people (as given in Exodus, xxxii., 27): "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate without the camp and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor"? And have we not reason to judge that, in keeping with these injunctions, there were slain that day, by the Levites, thy priests, three thousand men? Is it easy for loving, rational human beings to do homage to a God who could command and enforce such a fratricidal, bloody massacre? Is the spirit which dictated

that murderous command, by any possibility, loveable and adorable?

Has it never occurred to thy mind that thy treatment towards thy righteous servant Job was hardly such as a loving father would extend towards a deserving child? If there was none like him in all the earth, if he was a perfect and upright man, if he feared thee and eschewed evil, as thou didst declare he did, was it kind and affectionate in thee to despoil him suddenly and completely of his honestly acquired possessions, of his great numbers of sheep and cattle and asses and camels; to deprive his sons and daughters of life; and after all this to afflict him day after day with the most severe attack of boils—from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot—that a poor mortal ever suffered? Was this the way to requite such a good man for a long life of faithfulness? After receiving such compensation for a well-spent life, was not the poor man fully justified in giving utterance to his crushed feelings in the following language, and was not his estimate of thy kindness nearly correct?
“He breaketh me with a tempest and multiplieth my wounds without a cause. He will not suffer me to take my breath, but filleth me with bitterness.”

Had not the patient man great reason to think thy hand was heavy upon him, and that thou didst punish him most cruelly when he had done thee and his fellow men no wrong? Is such a requital for a faithful career calculated to increase confidence in the hearts of men in thy justice and equity? Will it encourage other men to walk uprightly and circumspectly?

Does it place thy conduct in a better light when we are told in the narrative that thou didst enter into a league or compact with Satan to afflict and torment that good man? If thou didst consent that Satan should bring upon poor Job all the afflictions that were poured upon his poor defenseless head, was it not in reality just as bad as though thou hadst done it all with thine own hands? If a parent gives his consent to an enemy and an inferior to torment and punish and sorely afflict his child—his obedient and dutiful offspring—is he not just as culpable as though he had performed the vile deed himself?

Does not the fact that thou didst negotiate with a deadly enemy for the perpetration of a nefarious series of wrongs, detract seriously from thy good reputation? Is not one who willingly associates with Satan and enters into compact with him and is governed by his wishes about as bad as Satan himself?

Does not the story place thee and the Devil upon an equality, and does it not represent that thou and he were upon very friendly terms, and that a social, friendly intercourse was maintained between thee and him? Did Satan tempt thee to afflict poor Job, or didst thou tempt him? Didst thou not first speak to him upon the subject? Dost not thou and Satan stand about equal in the honor, if honor it was, or in the culpability, if culpability it was, of sorely afflicting a righteous man who had done no wrong? Hast thou and Satan entered into similar compacts on other occasions and for similar purposes? Has not, in fact, a sort of partnership or a good understanding been kept up between you all along?

Did the Psalmist have a correct conception of thee, Jehovah, when he said to thee, "Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy; and they which hate us spoil for themselves. Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat, and hast scattered us among the heathen. Thou sellest thy people for naught, and dost not increase thy wealth by the price. Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbors; a scorn and a derision to them that are around about us. Thou makest us a by-word among the heathen; a shaking of the head among the people. My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me. For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth, by reason of the enemy and avenger" (Psalm xliv. 10-16).

Jehovah, may we allude to the matter of adultery between Zimri, of thy people, and Cozbi, the daughter of Zur, of the Midianites? Was it not at thy instigation, or by thy permission, that Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, with a javelin ran them through their bodies at the time they were committing the act? Was it not this deed which stayed the plague which thou hadst sent upon thy people, and by which twenty-four thousands of thy favorites were sent to their graves? If all the cases of adultery committed

by thy chosen people in ancient and modern times had been punished in this summary manner, would not the population of the earth have been very materially diminished? If David and Solomon had been served in the same way, would it not have been equally just? Didst thou not, in the conversation thou hadst with Moses, give Phinchas the credit of turning thy wrath away from thy people on that occasion? Wouldst thou not otherwise have consumed them far more fearfully? Didst thou not also command Moses to hang up the heads of the people in the sun, that thy fierce anger against the people might be turned away? In those cases, did not the innocent often suffer in place of the guilty? Did this conduct of the people justify the additional slaughter of scores of thousands of men, women, and children of the Midianites which was accomplished a few days afterwards? Didst thou really approve of the murderous conduct of Phinchas? Was it proper for a priest to punish with death, and without trial or enquiry, those who had committed an offense? If it was right in that day, would it not be right to-day? If blood appeased thy anger then, does it have the same effect now?

Was it not rather severe, that, in thy slaughter here alluded to, Balaam, the prophet who had so faithfully spoken the word which thou hadst put into his mouth, should also be mercilessly put to death? After the gold and silver of his king, Balak, had failed to induce the good man to speak against thee, but to honestly speak in thy favor, was it not a little hard in thee to have him put to a murderous death, and for committing no offense? Was such treatment calculated to bring the surrounding nations to thy service, and to increase their confidence and love toward thee?

Jehovah, did not the same spirit of slaughter, and the same fondness for taking human life which marked thy conduct on the occasions referred to, actuate and control thee in numerous other instances? Wert thou not with thy people during the three days when Israel was set against Benjamin (Judges xx.), and didst thou not advise the conflict by which over one hundred thousand, including the women and children, were put to death by the sword and by fire within the three days? Does it not say expressly: "The

Lord smote Benjamin before Israel"? And was not the burning of the city, and the massacre of the wives and daughters and the little children in the same way, also done by thy hand, or with thy assistance?

When the war broke out between thy own people, under Rehoboam and Jeroboam—Judah against Israel—didst thou not take sides with the former and cause the death of five hundred thousand people in one day? (2 Chron. xiii.) Was not this immense slaughter done by thy will and with thy immediate assistance? Does it not say, in fact, in the narrative, that thou wast the captain of the forces of Judah; that thou didst smite the forces of Israel under Jeroboam, and didst deliver them into the hands of Abijah? Was not that a terrible slaughter, indeed! Couldst thou really enjoy the shedding of so much blood of thine own people, and the useless sacrifice of so much precious human life? Can it be that a God of love and mercy would delight in having 500,000 of his children brought to an untimely death in a single day? Has any demon that has ever been written about shown a tithe of the cruelty and blood-thirstiness here charged, Jehovah, upon thee?

Is it not a little incredible, by the by, that a country so small as Palestine, scarcely larger than the State of New Jersey, should be able to raise two immense armies, one of eight hundred thousand, and the other of four hundred thousand—twelve hundred thousand fighting men in all? Is there any portion of the earth, of the same size to-day, able to raise two such mighty armies? Is it not barely possible that there might have been some mistake on the part of the scribe or of the transcriber, or of the printer, in getting the figures so large?

After this, when the tables were turned, and Israel, under Pekah, subdued Judah, and 120,000 more of thy people were killed in a single day, wert thou not with them, and didst thou not speak to them by the mouth of thy prophet? Was it not, indeed, rather bad management that such family quarrels should arise among thine own chosen nation, and that such vast numbers should be meat for the bloody sword, and that the life-fluid of man should be made to run in torrents? Couldst thou not easily have prevented it hadst

thou desired? Does it not sometimes strike thee as being singular how a God of mercy and love could delight in or permit such carnage, bloodshed, and wholesale murder? Why couldst thou not have taken milder and more kindly means of working upon the feelings and impulses of thy people, and inciting to activity their better natures, their love, their affection, and their dutiful allegiance to thee?

Jehovah, didst thou not show thy fondness for taking human life in former times by causing the death of one hundred thousand Syrians, on a certain day, as given in 1 Kings xx., when they were pitted against thy people? And those who remained alive and fled to Aphek for safety, didst thou not throw a wall upon them and kill twenty-seven thousand more?

Didst thou not, on another occasion, send out thy angel who slew 185,000 Assyrians in a single night, so that when they arose the next morning, they found themselves "dead corpses"? Do not the few instances we have named, besides numerous others not named, prove thee to have been fond of taking the lives of men in large numbers, and that thou didst place an exceedingly low estimate upon human life? Wert thou not distinctively a God of blood, and one who delighted in causing the death of thy own creatures? Of all the numerous gods that men have devised and worshiped, is there one who has been so fond of taking life as thou; one who has killed a tithe of the human beings that thou hast killed, or has shed one-hundredth part of the living blood that thou hast spilled? Canst thou not truthfully be considered a God pre-eminently fond of taking human life and of shedding the blood of thy own creatures? Didst thou not take absolute pleasure in dealing death and destruction upon those thou hadst brought into existence and those, too, whom thou hadst taken under thy especial protection?

Is it strange, in view of all the features and characteristics ascribed to thee by those who wrote concerning thee, that thou wert thought to be a bloody, a merciless, a capricious, a revengeful, a vindictive, a malicious, a monstrous, a treacherous, a tyrannical, and a murderous God? In view of the base and heinous deeds charged upon thee, is it strange that thousands should doubt that such a being ever

existed, but that he is, in fact, the mere creation of ignorant, superstitious, diseased, distempered minds?

May we ask also, has not thy disposition changed somewhat in this respect within the last few thousand years? Dost thou take the same pleasure in wasting life and shedding blood that thou didst in former times? Hast thou not, in fact, greatly withdrawn thyself from the common affairs of men, and dost thou not leave them to fight their own wars, and to kill each other as they please, and without any especial attendance or assistance from thee? Where now a nation or an army by superior strength and prowess, or by virtue of greater strategy and generalship, is able to gain an advantage over another nation or army, dost thou not leave them to fight it out among themselves, and is not victory pretty sure to perch on the banners of the side having the greatest strength and ability, regardless of any partiality which thou mightst be supposed to feel? Was not Bonaparte about right when he said that "Providence is always on the side of the strongest battalions?" Is not the time fast approaching when the affairs of this world will be left entirely with the people who live in it, and when thou wilt withdraw from the control and superintendence of mundane affairs? May we not expect that the era is not far distant when natural laws will be looked to solely as the causes of the events that transpire in the world, and when the government of an invisible providence, of an unseen and unknown God will be regarded as a figment of the brain, or a mere outgrowth of crude myths and dark superstitions of former ages?

Are not those ardent friends of thine who claim to have superior facilities for learning thy will and thy purposes, greatly at fault when they attribute to thee and to thy direct agency the terrible casualties and the frightful disasters that so frequently occur? When a steamboat boiler explodes and scores and hundreds are instantly blown out of the world, is it thou who does it, or is it simply the result of natural laws? In the destructive fires which not long ago devastated Chicago and Boston, was it thy immediate work or were those fires simply natural results as really as the burning of a pile of shavings? In the terrible cyclone which

recently swept over parts of India, and by which—by its forcing the waters of the sea many miles inland—nearly 250,000 people were suddenly swept from life, was it a freak of thy anger for the purpose of destroying human life, as in olden times, or was it simply a result of natural causes, as are all winds, all rains, and all storms? Will it not be better for the world when it learns to regard all actions of the elements as natural processes, merely, and not lay to thy charge destructive disasters which are due solely to Nature's laws, and with which thou hast nothing to do?

Great Jehovah, thou hast often been called the God of Truth. We are told that thou art the author of truth; that there is no truth save in thee; that thou abhorest lying; that a lie never proceeded from thee, and that on the other hand all lies have emanated directly from thy great enemy, the Devil, who a thousand times has been denominated the "Father of Lies." We, too, Jehovah, are lovers of truth. We deem truth eminently superior to falsehood, and we cannot help believing that all systems and institutions, however hoary with years, that are founded on falsehood and have not truth for a basis, must eventually topple over and become a part of the debris of the dark and gloomy past. May we, Jehovah, carefully inquire of thee for information respecting the truth which so greatly and so peculiarly abounds in thee and emanates from thee? If we find aught but truth pertaining to thy character or in thy record, may we not be justified in concluding that it came from thy great adversary, or that thy character has been most untruthfully represented to us, and that thou art not the God of truth thou art claimed to be?

To recur, then, to the beginning, when thy book says that thou madest our first parents, innocent and ignorant, and placed them in a lovely garden, beset by the most deadly perils—a most pernicious fruit and a wily tempter to lure them to eat it, and which in the immensity of thy knowledge thou must have known would prove the ruin, not only of the first man and woman, but through them of the countless billions of their offspring to succeed them, down to the present moment, and we know not how many years after us—when thou saidst

to grandfather Adam in that memorable interview thou heldst with him after thou hadst caused all the trees to grow out of the ground, including the tree that was destined to ruin quintillions of the human race, and thou saidst in speaking of the fruit of that tree, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," did thy words prove true? Did he die on that day? Did he not, on the other hand, live nine hundred and thirty years afterward? If he really died on that day, could he live nearly a thousand years after that date? Did not the serpent or Satan, as he really was, come far nearer the truth when he said to our simple-minded, unsophisticated grandmother, "Ye shall *not* surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil?" Did not Satan, in fact, tell the woman the precise truth? Does not the fact that thou saidst soon after the two had eaten of the fruit, "Behold, the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil, and now lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever," prove that Satan had spoken truly and that thou hadst not? If they really died on the day they eat of the fruit is it likely that thou wouldest have feared that they would take of the tree of life and live forever? How could they live forever if they were already dead or struck with death? Was not thy uneasiness about the tree of knowledge of which they had partaken entirely because it had made them like unto thyself—"as one of us,"—and that their eyes were open to know good and evil? Was it because they were dead? Wast thou not, in fact, wholly opposed to their living forever? And wast thou not a little jealous of them after they had eaten of the tree of knowledge because it opened their eyes and made them so much like gods? And didst thou not take means against their living forever?

Then did not Satan speak truly; and didst thou not greatly misrepresent the facts of the case? Was it an honorable falsehood to first pretend that they would die on the very day they eat of the fruit, and then, after they had eaten of it to be fearful that they would never die but live forever, and that lest this should be the case, to forcibly

drive them from the garden and place an armed guard at the gate to prevent their return and the possibility of their gaining eternal life ?

Jehovah, is it not a good way, and the true way to get out of the awkwardness of the situation presented in this apple-and-snake story to understand that it is only an allegory; that it is not true that snakes ever spoke human language, or that a woman ever spoke snake language; that knowledge and immortality never grew upon trees, and that a snake was never able to circumvent thee and destroy all thy plans and to eternally ruin such countless numbers of human beings ? Is it not far better to acknowledge the truthr that this story was a mere *allegory*, or, as learned men have denominated it, an *epic*, borrowed from the Egyptians or the Chaldeans, and was not incorporated into the Jewish Scriptures until the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, after the Babylonian captivity, when they kept seventy scribes for a long time writing up thy word, thy law, and thy history, incorporating into it as a basis the theory of the creation and the origin of man from the legends and traditions they had learned in Chaldea ? Are not legends very similar to the one contained in the Jewish Scriptures, respecting the Garden of Eden, the tempting fruit, the luring of the serpent, and the fall of man, found in the ancient writings of the Hindoos, the Parsees, and several other nationalities, some of whom are of greater antiquity than the Jews ?

Is it not also true that the man Moses never saw nor heard of the book of Genesis ? Has not the attributing of the authorship of the book to Moses been wholly unauthorized by any proof whatever ? Is it not also true that at the time of Moses the Jewish nation and very few of the other nations of the earth wrote histories or books of any kind ? Was not every writing the Jewish people possessed written at a much later period—three thousand years at least—after their return from the Babylonian captivity when the necessity was felt for a written history and a written law, and when the somewhat learned men, Ezra and Nehemiah, with their seventy expert scribes and scholars, got up many of the books subsequently consolidated into the Bible ? Is there anything in the Bible which such a class of men could not

easily have invented and written ? Is there anything in it that almost any man could not have devised and written, especially when they had the laws and the traditions of older nations to draw from ?

Is not the fact that the name of Moses was not mentioned by one of the prophets in the books assigned to them almost a proof that he and his story were an afterthought, and that he had no existence in fact save in the brains of those who devised the character and the story ? Does not his name and his character as a law-giver, bear a striking resemblance to the older Menu of India, Menes of the Egyptians, and Minos of ancient Greece ? Was not Moses—the foster-child of an Egyptian princess—a mere copy, an invention, an imitation from the older characters of the myths named, and is it not more probable than otherwise that one character was the type for all ? Is it not true that the law-giver, Menu, who gave statutes and institutes to the ancient Aryans and Hindoos, far older than the Jews, possessed really much greater antiquity than anything that is ascribed to Moses ? Did not the traditions of Menu and Menes afford sufficient data for a set of shrewd men to make use of in getting up a pretty respectable Moses ?

Is it not also true that a few thousand years ago very little truthful history was written by any nation ? Were not myths and fables, extravagant and impossible narrations so far the rule in what was written, that in our day and age it is nearly impossible to tell in any of the old records and histories which is actual and which is myth ? Was it not common also for nations to borrow literary ideas and sacred legends from each other ? Did not the Jews borrow much of their theology and history from other nations ? Inasmuch as there were nations older than the Jews who had a theology similar to that which the Jews afterward adopted, is not the probability very strong that they appropriated to their own use the theology of those other nations ?

Great Jehovah, let us further search for the truth that is in thee. Were the promises which thou didst so frequently and so strongly make to thy servant Abraham fully verified ? Thou didst covenant to give him and his seed the entire country from the hill to the Euphrates; did they even for a

single year ever possess one half of it? Is not the country thou gavest them (the promised land) but a small country at best, scarcely any larger than the State of New Hampshire, and fully one-fourth of it so broken as not to be tillable or habitable? Did the descendants of Abraham at any time fully possess that land? Did not some of the descendants of the Canaanites remain there and trouble them at intervals for hundreds of years?

Was the promise so often made in respect to their vast numbers, that they should be as the stars of heaven or as the sands of the sea for multitude ever fulfilled?

Could a small country, containing not more than 11,000 square miles, sustain such a numerous people? Have not other nations of the earth been far more numerous than the Jews and maintained an independent nationality ten times as long as they did?

Thou gavest thy word that they should have that land as an inheritance for all time, or "for an everlasting inheritance;" has that promise been verified? Was not that country often taken from them in part or wholly? Has a single country on the face of the globe changed hands oftener? Have not the Jews been completely dispossessed of it for nearly two thousand years? Have not their enemies possessed the Holy Land and the Holy City for many centuries?

Didst thou fulfill to Jacob the promise thou madest to him when thou directedst him to go down into Egypt and didst say to him, "I will surely bring thee up again"? Didst thou ever bring him up again? Did he not die in the land of Egypt?

Didst thou not send Moses from the land of Midian to Pharaoh with a lie in his mouth, to pretend to the king that thy people only wished to go a three-days journey into the wilderness, that they might sacrifice unto thee? Would not the truth in that case have been better than falsehood and deceit? Was not this untruthfulness particularly unnecessary when thou didst purpose to repeatedly harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the people go?

Didst thou not instruct the Israelites under a false pretext to borrow from the Egyptians their jewels of silver and

their jewels of gold, and their wearing apparel? Had they used no duplicity, would the Egyptians have loaned them their valuables? Didst thou take a certain proportion of that which they procured by falsehood and fraud, the same as that which they took by force and might? Was not the gold and silver thus obtained subsequently used to make holy vessels and utensils for thy service?

Didst thou not allude to and admit thy "breach of promise" in Numbers xiv., 34.?

Didst thou not feel like setting thy oath aside, to bring thy people into the promised land when, at some displeasure after the return of the spies, thou didst say to them: "Doubtless ye shall not come into the land concerning which I sware to make you dwell therin"? (Numbers xiv. 30.) Didst thou not feel at that time like going back on thy word to them?

Didst thou not use duplicity or deception with the Israelites at the time the serious quarrel took place between them and the Benjamites, and when in consequence of the Levite concubine they lost forty thousand lives by trusting to thy oracles or the advice that misled them into a terrible slaughter?

Didst thou not through thy prophet Samuel, use a pretext about sacrifice at the time he anointed David King of thy people? (Sam. xvi., 2.)

Did not thy prophet Micaiah, speak of thee as holding a council concerning measures for the destruction of Ahab by falsehood and lies? Didst thou not enquire among thy prophets, "Who shall entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?" When various answers were made, did not one come and stand before thee and say, "I will entice him?" Did he not say that he would go forth and be a lying spirit in the mouth of thy prophets? Didst thou not say, "Thou shalt entice him and prevail also, go forth and do so"? Did not thou say at that time, according to thy word, "Behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee"? (2 Chronicles, xviii., 19-22, and 1 Kings, xxii., 20-23.) Are we to take these passages as proofs of thy truthfulness and veracity?

Did Jeremiah speak truly or falsely when he exclaimed, "Ah, Lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this thy people and Jerusalem; saying, Ye shall have peace, where the sword reacheth unto the soul"? (Jer., iv, 10.) Did not the same prophet say to thee, "Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar and as waters that fail?" (Jer., xv., 18.) Did he not again bitterly complain of thy deceitfulness in these words, "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed; I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me"? Did not Isaiah likewise charge thee with causing "the people to err from his way"? (Isa., lxiii., 17.) Didst thou not say by Ezekiel, "If the prophet be deceived, I have deceived him"? (Ezek., xiv., 9.) Did not the prophet Amos say, "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" Through thy prophet Isaiah didst thou not say, "I make peace and create evil"? (Isa., xlvi., 7.) Dost thou agree with Paul that for certain reasons it is right for thee to send strong delusions that men may believe a lie? (2 Thess., ii., 11.) and that if thy truth can most abound through a lie that it is quite admissible? (Rom., iii., 7.)

From these and many other portions of thy word, do we not almost irresistibly come to the conclusion that although thou art called the God of truth, yet also from thee sometimes proceedeth falsehood? and that though thou art the author of good, thou art also the author of evil? Does it not necessarily detract from the high character which we fondly attribute to thee, to be compelled to admit the statement that from thee has also proceeded prevarications and untruthfulness?

Was not, Jehovah, the fault sometimes with thy prophets, who assumed to speak thy word? Were they not fallible mortals, and wert thou not sometimes made to suffer by the untruthful and improper words which they assumed to speak for thee, just as many of thy professed servants in this age (the clergy) do now say many things, and do many deeds, in thy name, which are wholly unworthy of an upright, honorable character? Did not many of the ancient prophets, upon various occasions, act as conjurers, sooth-sayers, fortune-tellers, quack doctors, etc.? When Saul

went to search for his father's lost asses, did he not fall in with a company of this kind of prophets? Didst thou not by the mouth of Micah denounce this class of prophets thus: "Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry peace, and he that putting not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him"? (Mic. iii., 5) Was it not this class that thou didst refer to when thou saidst, "The prophets prophesy lies in my name; I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them; they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart"? (Jer. xiv., 14).

Did not some of the prophets show a great fondness for the fees and presents which were paid them for their services in talking for thee? and were not their exactions very onerous upon their patrons or customers? When Jeroboam sent his wife to Abijah to learn the issue of his son's temper, did he not send with her "ten loaves and shekels and a cruse of honey," which were duly accepted? (1 Kings xiv., 3.) Did not Benhadad, when he sent to enquire of Elisha on a similar occasion, also send to the prophet forty camels laden with good things, to insure a favorable response? Was not such prophesying rather remunerative? When Naaman came to be healed, did he not bring with him a value equal to about \$10,000—6,000 pieces of gold with ten suits of clothing? (2 Kings v., 5.) Was not the pay extremely ample in that case?

Did not Nehemiah accuse the prophets that they could be hired to prophesy to suit their employers? (Neh. vi, 12-13.) Did not Micah say, "The prophets divine for money"? (Micah iii., 11.) Were not thy prophets often arrayed on opposite sides and in opposing factions, as with Judah and Israel, and did they not often clash and contradict each other? Was not the cruelty of some of thy prophets most conspicuous? Did not Elijah slay four hundred and fifty priests of Baal at one time, and over one hundred at another time? Did not Elisha cause the death of forty-two little children by she-bears on one occasion? Did not the prophet Jeremiah utter the following malevolent wishes against those whom he regarded as his enemies: "Therefore deliv-

er up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword ; let their wives be bereaved of their children and be widows ; and let their men be put to death, and let their young men be slain by the sword in battle "? (Jer. xviii., 20.) Dost thou approve of such a spirit?

As some of thy prophets accused thee of lying and deceit didst thou not effectually turn the tables upon them ? Was not their vile conduct often the result of hard drinking and excessive indulgence in that direction ? and didst thou not so express thyself ? Didst thou not say by Isaiah, "The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink; they are swallowed up of wine, they err out of the way through strong drink; they are in vision, they stumble in judgment; tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so there is no place clean " (Isaiah, xxviii., 7-8). Were not such conditions rather unfavorable for a first-class article of prophecy ?

Didst thou not say by Jeremiah, "The prophets prophesy lies in my name. I sent them not, neither spake unto them. They prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and deceit of their heart"? (Jer., xiv., 14.) Upon which thou saidst, "Thus saidst the Lord of Hosts; hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you; they make you vain; they speak a vision of their own heart and not out of the mouth of the Lord." "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied." "I have heard what the prophets said that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed; I have dreamed " (Jer., xxiii., 16, 21, 25).

Didst thou not say by Ezekiel: "Woe unto the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit and have seen nothing. O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, the Lord sayeth, and the Lord hath not sent them, and they have made others to hope they would confirm the word. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, when as ye say, the Lord sayeth it; albeit I have not spoken. Therefore; thus sayeth the Lord God because ye have spoken vanity and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God "?

Did not thy prophets make an easy living by the trade they followed, and did they not enjoy immunity from hard labor, much as thy priests do at this age of the world? Were they not a burden to the public, and did not the disadvantages with which they oppressed the people more than counterbalance all the benefits they conferred? Would not the world have been better off without them, and the errors they inculcated? Are not thy prophets and priests of the present day much like them in this respect?

Great Jehovah, were not thy prophets of olden time a great trouble to thee, and did they not often do discredit to their holy calling and to thee? Were they not men with animal passions and imperfections, like their fellow beings? And were they not as liable to indulge in the weaknesses and infirmities common to our race about as often as other men?

In taking a retrospective view of those old Hebrew prophets, does it not strike thee that they were a peculiar and rather fallible lot of men? Wert thou to choose again for the same number of mouthpieces, couldst thou not make a better selection?

To begin with Moses—though he did not pretend to foretell future events, still he filled the place of prophet or mouth for thee—was he not, though said to have been the meekest of men, a very irascible, quick-tempered, relentless and exacting sort of person? Did not the manner in which he secretly murdered that unfortunate Egyptian and buried him in the sand, strikingly indicate his character and temper? Though thy word says he often held thee back and prevented thee from acting rashly and impetuously, and by persuasion kept thee from passionately destroying thy people, after all the trouble thou hadst taken to bring them out of a land of bondage, was he not also himself very rash and hasty? And though he often excelled thee in coolness and patience, did he not also quite frequently fly into fits of rage and fierce anger when exciting causes arose? Was not the occurrence of his breaking, in a passion, the two tables of stone on which thou hadst worked forty days at writing thy short code of laws, because his brother Aaron, the high priest, had gotten up a golden calf in his absence, and

the people had begun to worship it, a case in point?

Was not his anger, as well as thine own, greatly aroused, also, at the time of the revolt of Korah, Dathan and Abiram from his authority? Did he not on many other occasions show a hasty, impatient temper? Was it not, nevertheless, kind and amiable in him to so often prevent thee from stepping without the bounds of propriety, and making thyself ridiculous in the eyes of the surrounding nations, who perhaps would have laughed at thee and said thou hadst undertaken a contract, greater than thou wert able to perform? Did he not possess a great influence over thee, to be able to hold thee in check, and to assist thee in controlling thy anger and furious wrath, which without him thou seemedst hardly able to do? Did he not, with his plausible reasoning, often show thee the futility and impropriety of certain acts which thou didst threaten to commit? Did he not on many occasions prevent thee from "destroying Israel," whom thou so tenderly lovedst?

But with all the good qualities which Moses evinced in restraining thee in the moments when thou wert thrown off thy guard and became exceedingly angry upon small provocations, is it not true, also, that he was guilty of tyranny and cruelty in an excessive degree? Were not the cruel orders which he gave in reference to the murdering in cold blood of at least fifty thousand of the women and children of the Midianites, and the turning over of 32,000 young, innocent girls to gratify the beastly lusts of the soldiers, when a war of extermination was mercilessly prosecuted against that peaceful people, the most cruel and monstrous that a man ever gave? Could a person of beneficence, mercy, and forbearance ever be guilty of such measures? Did he not also show himself to be a blood-thirsty, relentless man, on numerous other occasions?

Did Moses, in these cases, by the by, act upon his own impulses, or did he simply carry out thy instructions? Does not thy word say it was the latter? Can it be that a God of mercy, love and kindness could ever give such commands? Is not that transaction concerning the Midianites one of the darkest blots that ever disfigured the fair fame of a god or a man? Are human beings in duty bound to love and re-

vere a God who could authorize such cruel and merciless conduct ?

Did not Samuel, although in the main a worthy sort of a man, oppose having kings to rule over Israel after thou hadst decided upon that course? Was he not also mistaken in the selection he made of King Saul, whom he anointed in thy service? Did he not afterwards find it necessary to revoke his choice in this business by withdrawing his favor from Saul and bestowing it upon David? Did Samuel act by thy instructions in this matter? If so, does it not speak rather badly for thy prescience or thy ability to judge of men and to foresee the future ?

Was not David, thy favorite prophet and psalm-singer, a man black with crimes of the darkest hue? Did he not cause the death of hundreds of thousands of people? Did he not play, on a grand scale, the part of an assassin, a robber and a brigand? Did he not prey upon surrounding nations, and despoil them in a most unfeeling and merciless manner of their honest possessions? Was he not most emphatically a man of blood and murder? Did he not basely cause the death of his loyal soldier Uriah, because he himself had fallen in love with his wife Bathsheba, and had committed adultery with her? Was he not a very lecherous man? and did not that passion lead him into the commission of many crimes and improprieties? For one who was a special favorite of thine—"a man after thine own heart"—was he not, in the familiar language of the day, a rather "hard nut?"

Was not the good prophet Elijah almost too much of a murderer to be a first-class saint? Was not the slaying of four hundred and fifty priests at one time, because they did not have the same religion and believe in the same God that he did, rather a bloody piece of business? Would not that transaction have done honor to the wild Indians of North America, or to the magnates of the Christian Church in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries? Was not also his putting to death with fire, over a hundred men at another time, simply because they asked a favor of him, decidedly a cruel, hard-hearted transaction? Would a really good man have a disposition to perform such an act?

How much, Jehovah, hadst thou to do with this taking of human life? Didst thou not assist thy servant Elijah somewhat? Could he have performed the work so effectually without aid from thee? Was it between thee and him, "like master, like man," or like God, like prophet?

But was not the vindictive Elijah good to the widows, or to one widow, at least? Did he not board with her during a long dry spell, when provisions became extremely scarce and dear? and did he not with thy aid, or without it, have the facilities for supplying her larder from day to day, from month to month, and from year to year? But did he not finally distinguish himself by a most remarkable aerial ride in a chariot of fire, drawn by horses of fire, since which time he has not been seen by mortal eyes?

Was not his servant, and thy servant, Elisha, a worthy disciple of the good Elijah? Was not his causing the death of forty-two young children by furious she-bears, because they reminded him of his hair being gone from the top of his head and because they suggested that he also should make an aerial ascension, worthy of Elijah in his palmiest days? Was not Elisha also good to the women, or rather to an old man's buxom wife? Did he not kindly aid her in getting a son after her husband had become so advanced in years that he could not render such aid?

By the by, Jehovah, is it strange that in reading the story of the sudden and mysterious disappearance of Elijah while in company with Elisha only, that it has been thought a theory more probable, that Elisha put the older prophet quietly out of the way and secreted his body, thus gaining possession of that wonderful mantle which was capable of parting rivers and causing their waters to pile up like walls, and also to become prophet-in-chief to thee in place of Elijah who was rather in his (Elisha's) way, than that the old prophet had risen up by means of a fiery chariot and horses in the cold thin ether of the atmosphere of the upper regions? Is it not far more in keeping with the experience of mankind? Have not rulers and officials in various capacities thus often been quietly sent to their rest by those who wished to fill the shoes they wore, while there is no authentic and reliable record of a man going off bodily into

the upper air ? Is it not true, too, that human life was but lightly valued in those times, and that a single life, more or less was an insignificant matter with either Elijah or Elisha?

Was not thy prophet Isaiah an erratic, ranting, bombastic sort of person ? and are not the chapters in the Bible ascribed to him the most disjointed, disorderly, incoherent, extravagant set of compositions that ever were written and gathered together ? Is not some of it mere wild rhapsody, more adapted to the capacity of a lunatic than a sane man ? Is not some of it history, but disconnected and fragmentary, without beginning or ending ? Is it not clearly the production of more than one person ? Were there not two or more Isaiahs ? Can such wild and crazy matter be prudently taken as a guide by any sensible class of persons either as to what has taken place in the world or is to take place ?

Is not the book ascribed to Jeremiah much of the same irregular, di-jointed character, partaking in part of history and in part of a species of composition which passes for prophecy ? Was he not rather of an equivocal sort of person ; and was there not some justice in the charge made against him that he was not true to the best interests of his own nation but subservient to the interests of Nebuchadnezzar of the Chaldeans ? Were not many of the chapters—which he never wrote—added to his writings long after he had ceased to live ?

Was he not also a dolorous and melancholy character ? Did he not moodily brood over the troubles which beset him and his people ? Are not his "Lamentations" the result of this peculiarity of his ? Is it not strictly true that the writings attributed to Jeremiah referred almost entirely to the condition of captivity in which his countrymen were then held, and that they have no application, and are of very little use, to the people of the present age of the world ?

Was not Ezekiel much of the same kind of character ? and did not his visions relate almost wholly to the condition of his people in their irksome captivity ? and were not his dreams mostly of his native country, his beloved city of Jerusalem, and the blessings that would inure to his

countrymen were they restored to their former privileges ? Was he not sometimes very coarse and vulgar in style ? and did he not put things into thy mouth, or represent thee as speaking words and uttering sentiments which thou never didst utter ? Are not the instructions about mixing human excrement with the bread for the people, as given in Ezek., chap. iv., of this character ? In short, could not the world relinquish all that is contained in the book of Ezekiel without suffering material loss ?

Was not the dreamer Daniel another wild, erratic, visionary character ? Have his dreams or his visions ever been of the slightest profit to the world ? On the contrary, have they not been a great detriment and injury ? Have not months and years been spent by infatuated interpreters of thy word and thy mysteries in counting up the days and weeks, "the time, time and a half time" mentioned by Daniel, to ascertain when the end of sublunary things should come ? and has not the date for the final end of the world often been set, when the old earth should cease to roll, and when the sun and moon should be turned to blood and the stars fall from heaven ? Have not the periods for all this to come to pass been set scores and scores of times ? and have not people in consequence been induced to neglect the affairs of life and to become fanatics and lunatics in consequence of Daniel's dreams and visions ? and has not much very valuable time thus been worse than thrown away ? Is it not true, Jehovah, that the Book of Daniel is a production of an age some three or four hundred years later than the date accorded to it in the Bible ? And is not the character of Daniel entirely a myth ?

Has not the invention or the introduction of the *Multiplication Table* and the *Rule of Three*—or *Froportion*—in mathematics been of vastly more importance to the human race than a thousand Daniels and Elijahs with their dreams and visions, yes, with all the other prophets, named and unnamed, thrown in ? Have the hordes of prophets that have lived upon the toiling masses been of any real utility to mankind ? Could they not have been dispensed with and the world revolved through space just as well without them ?

We have not named the "lesser prophets;" is it necessary

to do so, though they ante-date the greater prophets ? Were not their productions of the same wild, incoherent, and incongruous nature of those already alluded to ? Did not their disjointed, disconnected ravings apply mainly to the events of the times in which they were written ? Were they of any particular service then ? and are they of any appreciable value now ? Has not the invention of the steam engine and its application to machinery done a thousand times more to help along the human race in the struggle of life than the labors of all the prophets and of all the gods combined ?

Was Jonah one of thy prophets ? Didst thou really raise him up to do the great work which he performed ? If so, how is it that his immense labors have not the slightest connection with the Jewish history and writings ? And if his career was of so much consequence that such an unnatural, improbable, and impossible feat was performed on his account, as his being swallowed by a fish and remaining three days unharmed in its stomach, and then thrown up at the expiration of that time upon dry land, why does not his name and adventures appear in other parts of the Bible ? and why is his name not mentioned by some of the Jewish writers ?

As his career is not alluded to by the old Bible writers; as his story is not located within the territory of the Jews; as all the localities named in connection with him belonged to the "heathen," is it not reasonable to conclude that the story is a heathen tale, gotten up to amuse some ingenious heathen writer, and that from its novelty and improbability it was adopted by the Jews, and centuries afterwards was added to the compilation called the Bible ?

Is it not rather unjust to make thee father such a silly, unmeaning story ? If thou wert anxious to show thy power, and how thou couldst set the laws of nature aside, would it not have been far more striking for Jonah to have swallowed the whale and even the city of Nineveh itself ? Could men have doubted him or his capacity after he had swallowed them ? Do not our swallowing abilities have to be taxed in a degree almost equal to that, to passively and unquestioningly accept all that is said

about Jonah and Daniel and Ezekiel and Jeremiah and Isaiah and Elisha and Elijah and Moses, and all the rest of the "Holy Prophets"? Is not the belief in the vast services they have rendered the world of mankind, and that they were specially commissioned to speak for the great God of the Universe, fast passing away? and are not men turning their attention to subjects and discoveries vastly more useful, sensible, and true?

Dost thou now consider that thy cause was greatly advanced by the aid and services of thy numerous prophets? Couldst thou not have got along just as well in running this diminutive globe without their services as with them? Did they not often compromise thee and place thee in very embarrassing circumstances? Didst thou not find, in fact, that the mischief they did and the trouble they made, fully counterbalanced all the good they accomplished for thee? May it not be inferred that this is the reason why thou hast seen fit to dispense with their services for the past twenty centuries? If they were essential to the success of thy enterprise in former times, and if thou couldst not manage this whirling sphere and control thy turbulent, restless people without their aid, how is it that thou hast been able to get along without them for these two thousand years? If they were necessary then, why not now?

In looking at the past, is it not strange, we repeat, even to thyself, why thou shouldst have needed such a motley, conglomerate assortment of worthless men to speak thy word, and to convey intelligence from thee to the inhabitants of the earth, or rather, to a single diminutive race of wild, contentious, marauding people, who occupied the hilly country of Palestine, comprising only 11,000 square miles of territory? Is it not singular, to look at it now, that so great a God as thyself could not get along in transacting his business without employing such a crazy, erratic class of men as the Jewish prophets? Did they do anything worthy of great men and which the world to-day has reason to hold in high veneration?

As thou hast learned to dispense with that class of men altogether, is it not fair to conclude that thou hast improved by experience, and hast learned that there is a better way to

manage thy affairs than to have so many extravagant, contradictory, imperfect, and unreliable mouthpieces? And will it not be much the same, Jehovah, with the more numerous class, the priesthood, in common with all the numberless gods and religions which the world has believed in? Hast thou not required, for more than thirty centuries, a vast number of idle, designing, assuming, contentious, exacting, and greedy men, who have lived upon the labors of others, without producing even a hill of beans or a stalk of corn to feed themselves and their wives and their children? Have they not, nevertheless, fed upon the best the earth has produced? Have they not feasted upon the daintiest and most savory dishes of capon, roast beef, venison, and yellow-legged chickens? Have they not been clad in rich garments, in broadcloth and fine linen? Have they not worn the silkiest hats and the shiniest patent-leather boots, which have been earned by the hands of others, and all because they claimed that they were mediators, middle-men, go-betweens, betwixt thyself and the rest of the inhabitants of the earth, making known to them thy will and desires?

Has it not been a most troublesome and expensive way of making known thy mind to thy large family of children, to keep up such an expensive retinue of idle, lecherous, worthless priests, to do thy will for thee? If thou hadst hit upon some general plan of communicating thy laws and purposes to the children of the earth, say in the strata of the rocks which form the crust of the earth, in the rivers, the hills, the valleys, and the towering mountains; in the plains, the forests, and the vast oceans of restless water; in the vegetation that springs from the soil; in the endless varieties of animal life, from the "mote that floats in the sunbeam" to the leviathans and whales that people the Arctic seas; in the finer fluids, gases, powers and forces that permeate the atmosphere and the substance of the earth and all matter; hadst thou, Jehovah, been content to reveal thyself in all this endless routine of marvels and beauties, could not thy children have learned quite as much of thee as they now know, and without the services of this burdensome, motley class of priests which the toiling sons of men have so long been compelled to support?

Really, could not the world have got along quite as well without this privileged priestly class, this self-constituted celestial aristocracy of assuming pretenders, as it has with them? Have they not taught far more lies than truths? Have they not attempted to instruct the people of thee and thy will, when they knew not a thing more of thee than the merest child in its mother's arms? Have they not in all ages assumed to know far more of thee and of the mystery of thy plans than they had the slightest authority for doing? Have they any more positive knowledge of thy nature, thy character, thy attributes, thy organization, thy personality, thy form and figure, thy appearance, thy residence or dwelling-place, thy disposition, thy wishes, thy designs, and thy secret will, than any other men? Have they any means of taking observations of thee, of learning of thy hiding-places, thy retreats and thy secluded walks, not equally open to all other men?

Have they not, in fact, hoodwinked the world for thousands of years by assuming to have knowledge of thee and thy purposes not imparted to the rest of mankind? Has not this assumption, this false claim, been their stock in trade, and by these means have they not maintained a domineering, tyrannical, aristocratic supremacy over their fellow beings? Is it not to this class in reality that is due the absurd and false theories of thyself that have been taught to the world? Have they not eudgeled their brains and taxed their ingenuity to get up inventions of thee and to excite wonder, fear, and apprehension of thee and of thy anger in the minds of their simple fellow beings?

Have they not, Jehovah, simply created thee, given thee the characteristics and dispositions which they have told the world of respecting thee? Has not this been the way with all the gods that have an imagined existence? Have they not been the inventions, the manufactures of the priests that have lived and flourished in the world by virtue of speaking for the gods they have made, and making known the will of these gods to the credulous, gaping multitudes who looked up to the same designing and villainous priests as almost superhuman in character and wisdom,

and as possessing a vast amount of knowledge of the gods and an immense influence at their courts and thrones ?

Has not this been the way the ignorant world has been going on for thousands of years ? Have not the priests been making gods and deluding people in reference to their vast knowledge and influence with them ? Have *thy* priests been any exception to the general rule in this respect ? Have they not given attributes to thee ? have they not declared what thy will has been ? Have they not professed a great influence at thy court precisely as the priests of the other gods have done ? Let us repeat, have they not actually been makers of thee ? Is not the world indebted to these pretentious priests and prophets for all they think they know of thee ? And have not the priest been richly repaid for the information and the inventions they have thus been the authors of ?

Have thine not been the most exacting as well as the most mischievous class of priests of all the gods that deluded men have worshiped ? Have they not incited more bloody wars ; have they not ruled kings and generals more absolutely and imperatively than any other class of priests that the sons of men have supported ?

Have not thy priests, Jehovah, under Jewish and Christian auspices, incited more bloody wars, have they not caused more streams of blood to flow, have they not caused a much greater sacrifice of human life, have they not devastated this fair earth, time and time again, far in excess of all the other priests of all the other religions of the world ? Does not history tell this bloody tale ? Has human happiness and prosperity had any more deadly and persistent enemies than thy pampered priesthood ?

Have not priests instituted and conducted for hundreds of years the most cruel and diabolical prisons and dungeons of torture where scores of thousands of hapless, wretched mortals have been tortured for days, nights, weeks, and months, with the most terrible cruelties the mind is capable of conceiving ? Have not unknown thousands of poor wretches been made to suffer a thousand deaths for merely lisping a word against the rule of the priests, and even for being suspected of having lisped it ? Have not great numbers been sent to the most cruel deaths conceivable without

even knowing their accusers or being informed of the crimes with which they were charged ?

Has not the rule of priestcraft in the world been a long reign of tyranny and blood ? Have not millions of hapless human beings, fathers, mothers, brothers, lovely maidens, prattling children, and little infants almost without number, been left to fester and decompose in cities, in quiet homes, and on the bloody field of war after being slain at the behest and instigation of the priests ? Have they not made a slaughter-pen, a charnel-house, a field of human gore, of the fairest portions of the earth ?

Would it not have been better, vastly better, that the world should know nothing of a Jehovah, nothing of an invisible, unknowable, incomprehensible, unreasonable deity, nothing but the vast Universe, with its boundless extent, its endless existence, its marvelous powers and capabilities; nothing of a bloody, mercenary, intriguing, designing priesthood, than to have the experience it has had ? Would not, in fact, no religion at all, save the natural good incentives and offices of the human heart, be greatly preferable to the rule of priestly tyranny, surveillance, and blood which the sons and daughters of men have been compelled to submit to ?

Have not the Jewish and the Christian priesthood been a most expensive luxury—if luxury they may be termed ? Have not *thou* and *they* been a most onerous tax to the portions of mankind that have believed in thee ? Would not honestly, a full knowledge of the Universe and its laws, —without priests, bishops, and prelates, save the teachers of science and philosophy—have been vastly better and cheaper for the world ?

Is it not *ignorance* that has made men delve in the dark recesses of mysticism and fable, that has caused them to manufacture crude and monstrous gods, and that has induced them to sustain and support the privileged, pampered, lecherous priesthood that have lived sumptuously upon the toil and sweat of the masses, giving nothing valuable in return ? Could not the world very profitably dispense with this onerous burden, and in place thereof learn the teachings of reason and common sense ? Is it not, then, the highest

absurdity for the world of mankind to continue to support in ease and luxury a class who thus secure their livelihood by a system of shams and false pretenses? Have not men a higher mission to perform than to always bow down to and support a class of useless priests? Are not the men who teach their fellows how to make the best use of this world, how to make this life useful and happy, how to elevate humanity to the highest perfection of which it is capable a thousand times more useful and worthy than the hordes of the priests of mysticism and superstition who teach mostly about appeasing an angry God, and about our duties and employments in a future residence above the stars?

Are not the priesthood of our own day and country—though through the evolution of mind and the advance in civilization and intellectuality less disposed to incite war and bloodshed than in the heyday of the Children of Israel and the times of the Crusades—do they not still show the same characteristics of subjecting the masses to their rule and dictation, to accept from them the oracles of a mysterious God, the will of heaven, and the fear of hell? Do they not, as of old, still require the people to look to them to learn the mysteries of godliness and the purposes of Deity? Do they not still, as really as in olden times, hold their fellows in a state of mental slavery and bondage? Though their power for inciting wars and shedding blood is greatly lessened, do they not still struggle to retain their supremacy over the intellect of man, to still hold him to the belief of the same old myths and superstitions which have so long cursed the world?

For this are not their hands laid as heavily upon the people as ever before? To support the sixty thousand priests of this country and their institutions does it not cost the laboring people fully \$200,000,000 annually? Do not the 600,000 Christian priests of the world cost the nations which sustain them \$1,000,000,000 annually? Are the benefits received anywhere in proportion to the outlay? Will not the world of mankind make a most excellent exchange by discarding the absurd errors, myths and dogmas taught and enjoined by priests, and receive in place thereof a fuller knowledge of the laws of the universe, of science, and truth?

Is the rule of priestcraft always to continue? When the people become more enlightened will not mysticism, supernaturalism, and priestly lies be compelled to retire to the rear and to relinquish their long, cruel, and bloody reign? Will not the human race be far happier under the benign rule of nature, rationalism, and science? Are not truth and reason immensely to be preferred to mythology, ignorance, and superstition? Will not the world be wiser, better, and happier when each man learns to do his own thinking, his own praying, his own communing with heaven, and learns to dispense with the entire brood of middlemen, go-betweens and priests?

Great Jehovah, we wish to know all we can of thee, and it is to thee we come for this knowledge. May we ask of thee concerning thy family relations, and the children thou hast begotten?

In Genesis vi. 2-4, it says thy sons "saw the daughters of men that they were very fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose"; and also after that when thy sons "went in unto the daughters of men, the daughters bore children to them; the same became mighty men, which were of old, men of renown."

May we enquire, Jehovah, as to the production of these sons? Didst thou beget them in the same way that all sons have been begotten in all ages and in all time, or did they come forth from thy brain in full size as the fabled Minerva is said to have emerged from the brain of thy competitor, Jupiter? As there was never a child born without a mother any less than without a father, is it not fair to conclude that thy sons spoken of were begotten like other sons with the assistance of a female, or several females?

This being conceded, does it not necessarily decide the great problem in the affirmative whether thou hast a personality? Does it not establish the fact that thou not only hast a form and organization, but thou hast also male organs of generation? Wilt thou make us to understand how thou couldst get sons unless this is so?

Is it not proper that in obtaining a full knowledge of thee and thy works we should know something of the mother or mothers of thy sons? Wilt thou inform us whether they

were heavenly or earthly in character? If they were heavenly were they immortal like thyself, having no beginning of existence; or were they creatures of thy forming? Is not the first the more reasonable supposition? And is it not fair to suppose that female organs of generation are as divine and of as early an origin as the male organs? As thou didst allow thy most favorite patriarchs, kings and prophets to have several wives each, is it probable that thou wouldest deem the luxury inadmissible in thy own case?

Is it not an improbable theory that thou wert wholly of the masculine gender, and that thy great opponent, the Devil, was wholly of the masculine gender, and both for countless quintillions of years—from the earliest morning of eternity—and that thereto was no female that ever had an existence till about six thousand years ago, when, by a skillful surgical operation and a little extra manipulation a “slight variation” was produced, and our grandmother Eve became a female? Are we to understand, we repeat, that masculinity has ever existed—say for ten thousand decillions of ages—and that femininity is only sixty centuries old? Is it not far more probable that the latter is as ancient as the former? that one is the counterpart of the other, and that one could not exist without the other?

Look at it whichever way we will, the maternity of thy sons puzzles us. If their mothers were of the imponderable, ethereal, invisible nature which thou art said to have, how could they bear sons possessing tangible physical bodies like men, and so they could take the daughters of men for wives and produce a powerful, mighty race as posterity? Does not the fact that thy sons were such a class of beings go strongly to prove that their mothers were natural, physical women, possessing all the parts and characteristics that women have ever possessed?

Does not this admission involve another difficulty quite as perplexing as the other? Can we by any possibility comprehend how an immaterial, ethereal, invisible masculine could cohabit with an ordinary physical feminine, composed of flesh and blood, and a progeny be the result? Is it not as difficult to realize this and fully believe it as it is the mythological stories earlier told of the gods Brahma, Vishnu,

Fohi, Ormuzd, Baal, Osiris, Devatat, Eros, Astarte, Zeus, Saturn, Jupiter, and a large number of other ancient gods, holding the sexual relation with females and begetting gods and demi-gods? Cannot all those legends and impossible narrations of mythologies be equally relegated to the same domain of invention?

Has not fondness for beautiful, fascinating women been a peculiarity of nearly all the gods that men have believed in, and does it not look much as though thou hadst, in this particular, borrowed from the pagan gods, who were believed in and made familiar to men long before thou wert heard of upon the earth? Can it be possible that thou or thy writers and defenders could have found it necessary to appropriate from the gods of the heathens, aught of their characters, actions, or attributes, particularly such features as pertain to sexuality, masculinity, and the cohabitation of the sexes?

Is it not true that Phallic worship, or the adoration of the god Priapus—the male organ of generation—is one of the oldest forms of worship known in the world, and which has descended from prehistoric ages to comparatively modern times? Was not the organ of masculinity regarded by many of the ancient nations as the creative, life-giving force, and was it not for ages looked to as the highest object of veneration? Is there not abundance of proof that this form of worship was common in India, in Chaldea, in Persia, in Egypt, in Thibet, in Assyria, in Phœneccia, and many other countries? Is not evidence of this found in the carvings in stone and in images in the ancient temples found in many of those countries? Were not the towers of ancient India, the round towers of Ireland, the Druidical piles, and much elsewhere in the same direction erected as symbols in honor of the god Priapus, and largely used in the Phallic worship? Have not relics and coarse sculpture been found in Mexico and California, showing that the aborigines of those countries were also devotees of the same worship? Is it not clear that this form of worship was prevalent over considerable portions of the earth as far back in the primitive ages of men as the "Stone Age"? Do not the crude carvings

and statues that have come down from that twilight age of the human race abundantly establish this fact?

Were not the generative organs of both sexes regarded as the most sacred parts of the human being, and were they not by means of symbols, figures, and devices of numerous kinds, for a long time held as the most legitimate objects of worship? Was not the male organ especially regarded as the creator of man and all human life?

Is it not true, too, that from this very source came many of the symbols that for thousands of years have been used in religious worship, particularly the Christian cross? Was not the cross first used as a symbol representative of the male generative organs, and for ages was it not regarded in that light? Was not the cross used in Egypt as a religious symbol representing life and fertility many centuries before the dawn of the Christian religion? Is not the same true of Thibet and other countries in Asia? Has not Christianity borrowed that symbol from the pagan world the same as she has borrowed from the same source her rites, her sacraments, her dogmas, and her worship? In fact, were not Mosaic Judaism and primitive Christianity largely made up from the ancient symbol-worship, and were not many of the old legends and traditions borrowed or appropriated from those early sources and gradually woven into the more modern religious formulas? Have not the religions of the world been mere outgrowths, one from another; and did they not all have their origin in prehistoric races of men when their ideas were crude and when the forces of nature and the elements were personified and worshiped as gods and goddesses?

To return, Jehovah, to thy sons mentioned in Genesis, may we ask were they thy *only* children? Hadst thou not daughters as well as sons? Is it not singular that among so many children that there should have been no females? Had there been the usual proportion of daughters among them would not thy sons have been saved the necessity of taking the daughters of men for wives and to be the mothers of their children? Or did they prefer the daughters of men because they were more physical, more tangible, more warm-blooded, and possibly more voluptuous?

Did not thy sons enjoy the sexual embrace with the daughters of men as fully as did the sons of men? Had they not about the same passions, the same loves and the same desires? Did they not inherit that characteristic from their father or was it wholly from the mothers' side?

Is it not the love of sexual pleasure that induces the co-habitation of the sexes far more than the desire for offspring? Does not this rule apply to gods as well as human beings? Is not pleasure the object and moving impulse in all cases, in all grades of animal life, from the highest forms to the lowest and most simple? Is it not a fortunate thing that this is the case? Were it not for this desire of pleasure—the sexual propensity—would there not be great danger that the race of men and the entire animal world would become extinct? Did this passion descend from the gods to men? or, *vice versa*, did it ascend from men to gods? According to all the traditions that come down to us, were they not an amorous, lecherous class? Is not this characteristic peculiar to all the higher forms of animal life? Are not the lower forms of animal life which have no sexual organs and propagate their species by the process of *gemmation* or *budding*, which is simply parts of the body being detached and assuming an independent life, as with the star-fish, jelly-fish, coral, polyps, and the other species of the *protozoans* and *radiates*, far inferior in every sense of the word to the classes of animals that possess sexual organs?

In the ancient sex-worship, was not the *yoni* almost equal with the *linga* as an object of worship and adoration? Did not the gods themselves pay special veneration and service to this deity, and have not the sons of men closely followed their example, even down to the present day?

May we enquire how it was that the progeny of thy sons, in union with the daughters of men, became so extinct as to be unrecognized from ordinary men? Were they short-lived and unprolific, or was it owing to their being a mongrel race between gods and men, and therefore like mules and other hybrids not possessing the power of reproduction?

May we enquire, too, what became of the sons themselves? If they were of thy begetting, were they not immortal and deathless? Could death ever come upon thy sons? But we

see them not on the earth now, nor have they been seen for thousands of years; how are we to account for it? Didst thou get weary of their toying and dallying with the daughters of men and therefore take them up to heaven and set them at other employment and in assisting thee to operate the Universe?

Were those the same sons that were a thousand years afterwards mentioned in the book of Job, where it narrates how thy sons gathered together to present themselves before thee, at which time Satan also presented himself? Were not these sons of the earth, and did they not live among men? What has become of this last-mentioned lot of sons? Have they, too, passed out of existence to leave room for others for the last four thousand years, or have they been promoted to a higher state of existence to assist thee in running thy heavenly kingdom and in managing the new Jerusalem?

Is there not a great obscurity about these sons of thine, how they came into existence, what kind of women their mothers were, what was the ultimate destination of both mothers and sons, where they now are, and what are their employments? Is there not a great deficiency in thy book in this respect? Would not thy word have been vastly more perfect and more satisfactory had it given full information upon these subjects and not left us so in the dark about thy family relations and the members of thy immediate household?

Great Jehovah, we would now ask thee in reference to thy last begotten son, even he that is called Jesus: Is he more distinctively and peculiarly thy son than those sons of thine mentioned in Genesis, who took the daughters of men for wives? or those mentioned in the Book of Job, who gathered together from various parts of the earth to present themselves before thee? Thou hast called Jesus thy "only begotten son," but how can this be? If those others were thy sons, didst thou not beget them? If thou didst not, who did? If they were begotten by another, could they truthfully be called *thy* sons?

Was it not, rather, because Jesus was thy youngest son—thy babe, so to speak,—and for that reason, thou hadst

a greater affection for him than for thy other sons, that thou calledst him thy "only begotten son"? Would not my "*best beloved son*" have expressed the truth of the case quite as correctly?

May we ask why Jesus should be regarded as thy best beloved son, or thy only begotten son? Was he better than thy older sons? Was he braver, smarter, or holier? Was he more like thee? or was he more like his mother? Was it because thou hadst a greater affection for his mother than thou hadst for the mothers of thy other sons, the same as thy servant David had a greater affection for the mother of Solomon than for any of his other wives, the mothers of his other children? Did not the holy man David love Bathsheba more affectionately than his other wives, because he had taken her from the honest and loyal Uriah? Were thy affections moved in a similar way towards Mary who was espoused to the simple-minded, unsuspecting Joseph?

Jehovah, as one of the grand systems of religion in the world—one standing third or fourth in magnitude, counting the numbers of its adherents—one that prevails over the parts of the earth deemed the most civilized, rests upon the version of thy intercourse, nearly nineteen hundred years ago, with the young Jewish maiden Mary, permit us to be somewhat particular in our enquiries touching it, as in the Christian system of theology it was a most important event. Is it not most essential, in fact, that we have a correct and explicit understanding of the entire business?

How is it, in consideration of its magnitude and importance to the world of mankind that the manner of the conception and entrance into the world of thy son is so indefinitely disclosed that two of the persons distinguished as *evangelists*, Mark and John, and who were chosen to give to the world the particulars of the life and mission of thy youngest and best beloved son, should have entirely omitted all reference to those occurrences, which, if the system is true, were the most important events that have ever occurred in the world? Did those writers discharge their full duty in suppressing the recital of such a momentous event, or in neglecting to relate it? Can they justly be regarded as truthful and reliable historians, when they entirely

ignore and keep out of sight such important operations? Was not, really, the begetting of a son by the God of Heaven and the Universe upon the person of an obscure, modest Jew girl, one of the most remarkable events that has ever taken place since time began, and since thou thyself had an existence? Was not that very transaction, which though perhaps it took but a few minutes to accomplish, one most momentous to the erring, sinful sons and daughters of men? Has it not more to do with their present and future happiness than all else that has taken place in the world, or anywhere else? Is there any other way made known by which the quintillions of the human race could be saved from thy adversary, the Devil, save by thy son's being begotten and born into the world to suffer and die for them? Can, then, Mark and John be in any manner excused for passing over in utter silence matters and events of such immense and unparalleled magnitude and importance? Does not this very fact greatly detract from the credibility of what they did say? Is not a historian or a chronicler of events, who suppresses most momentous occurrences, or who fails to give them, nearly as unreliable and as unworthy of belief as those who absolutely misstate the truth?

Was that suppression done by thy orders? If not, by whose direction was it done? If those narratives were not written by thy authority, then by whose authority were they written? If the salvation of the human race depends upon the events under consideration, is it not right and just that every human being should have all the facts in the case?

Is it not to be regretted also that the only two persons who seemed to know anything about that interview—that *liaison*—between the Jewish maiden and thyself, Matthew and Luke, should not have been able to relate it in the same way? Does not Matthew make the whole thing to rest upon a dream which Joseph had, while Luke attributes it all to a vision which Mary had?

Was Matthew present when Joseph did his dreaming, that he should be able to tell the world what it was? Was Luke present when Mary had her vision and talked with Gabriel, that he should be a competent witness to give a recital of it? Is it not unfortunate that the history of the

great event of the begetting of a god, which by his life and death was to save the whole world of mankind, past, present and future, should all rest upon a dream and a vision, and both told by second parties who were not present, and had no possible way of knowing anything about the facts they pretended to narrate? As the gospels of Matthew and Luke were not written for fifty or sixty years, at the very least, after the time that dream and that vision were supposed to have taken place, and as the writers had to go wholly by hearsay evidence—common rumor—or as they were under the necessity of drawing upon their imaginations (and one of them at least had an active one), is there not great probability that they have given an unreliable and unauthentic report? Are not the chances far more than equal that they did not give the dream and the vision strictly as they appeared to the dreamer and the visionist? What reliable data would a writer now have, to relate a dream dreamed over a half a century ago, about the advent of a person into the world long since dead and passed out of sight, and all the parties connected with the event dead also? Would he not have to dream it all over again—a dream of a dream or a vision of a vision?

What facilities had Matthew for knowing what Joseph's dreams were two generations before the time of writing? What were Luke's means of knowing what visions young Mary might have had half a century previously? Were they inspired to write what they did write? Did they lay any claim to inspiration? Did they not write simply in the style of a narrative as a writer would now give details of the American Revolution or of the early settlement of Western New York? Were not the chances for errors and misstatements most excellent? and were they not sufficiently improved?

Is this, Jehovah, the foundation upon which the great Christian religion rests—the narrations and stories of four men, written after years of time had passed, and from memory, tradition, and hearsay, or more probably still, not till more than two hundred years had passed away? Is there the slightest proof that the Gospels of Matthew and Luke were known to have an existence till the third century? Was it possible that either of the four writ-

ers called *evangelists* could, of their own knowledge and observation, write one-fourth part of what is accredited to them? Did either of them claim to have any other sources of information save tradition and hearsay? Did either of them claim that they were present and saw with their own eyes all that they stated? Would it have been true had they so claimed? Are not these simple facts sufficient to shake the confidence of all thoughtful, candid people in the character of the narrations given? Do not errors and mistakes, with the greatest efforts to the contrary, inevitably creep into all narratives, biographies, and histories, especially when the events written of, occurred half a century before the record is made? Has there ever been an absolutely truthful history written, in which every statement was perfectly truthful and without error? Was there a strictly accurate account written of a single battle in our late war? Is it not utterly impossible for any one man to have his eyes upon all parts of a field of battle and be able to state without error the movements of each division, each brigade, each regiment, and note with precision what was done by each general, each colonel, each captain and soldier on both sides?

To come down to the plain truth, have we ever had a perfectly correct account written of any event of magnitude that has ever occurred in the world? Have not some points been overlooked or omitted, and some defects in the statements been made—some bias this way or that—some coloring given not in accordance with the facts? Is it not absolutely impossible to get the full and perfect truth about anything that has taken place in the world, especially when the persons and events under treatment have long since passed away? Are not human testimony and human history at best very uncertain and unreliable? Do we know anything about any other?

But waiving all this for the present, let us return, Jehovah, to the little incident of thy begetting thy son, Jesus, according to the dream which Matthew says Joseph had on a certain occasion. According to that dream, was not the father of the child Jesus the Holy Ghost? Is *Holy Ghost* another name for thee, or was he only partially

thyself and partially not thyself—in one sense thee and in another sense not thee—partly so and partly not so ?

Is it not in that account which Matthew gives of Joseph's dream that the name of the Holy Ghost appears for the first time in thy word or book? Is not that the first time he was brought to the knowledge of thy readers? Was not the Holy Ghost wholly unknown to the old patriarchs, prophets, and priests? Did Noah know anything of the Holy Ghost at the time thou gavest him instructions how to build the ark and how to get all the kinds of animal life into it? During all that time did the Holy Ghost ever call upon Noah?

Did the Holy Ghost ever appear to Abraham who was so often favored with visits from thee? Although he was the father of thy future people, and although thou didst enter into a definite contract or covenant with him to carry out certain propositions on thy part, and held interviews with him on numerous occasions, did the Holy Ghost ever go to see Abraham? Did the old patriarch ever know there was a Holy Ghost? Did Isaac and Jacob know anything about a Holy Ghost?

Did Moses, who was so much with thee, who talked with thee face to face; and to whom thou also showed thy back parts, to whom thou didst show thyself in the burning bush, with whom thou didst pass forty days and forty nights on the top of Mount Sinai getting up the Ten Commandments, and who so often advised thee and restrained thee from fits of passion and fierce anger—did he know there was a Holy Ghost? Is it not singular that in thy close intimacy of forty years with this confidential agent, one who knew all thy secrets, thou never gave him the first hint that there was such a being as a Holy Ghost connected with thee, and was one-third part of thyself, and shared equally with thee in power and glory and majesty? Can there be any good reason for thy being so secretive, so *mum* with Moses on this very important point?

Did Joshua and Caleb and Jephthah and Samson and Samuel and Nathan know that there was such a being as the Holy Ghost? Did David—that godly man who was after thine own heart, and who, perhaps, pleased thee better than

any other man who ever lived—have the slightest idea of a Holy Ghost ?

Did Solomon, with all his wisdom, and his thousand wives and concubines, know aught of that mysterious personage, the Holy Ghost ? Did any of the kings who succeeded him on either of the opposing thrones of Israel and Judah have the first inkling that there was a Holy Ghost connected with thee ?

Did any of thy holy prophets, Joel, Amos, Micah, Hosea, Obadiah, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Nehemiah, Zechariah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Jonah, Habakkuk, Haggai, or Malachi, have the first hint about the existence of a Holy Ghost ? Is it not singular that in all thy interviews with these, thy chosen prophets, in all the communications thou hadst occasion to make to them of thy secret will and purposes, thou didst not at any time give them the slightest intimation that thou hadst a partner or counterpart, by name, Holy Ghost ?

Is it not *very* singular that thou shouldst have deemed it necessary to keep this important matter entirely hidden from all thy patriarchs, judges, kings, rulers, prophets, and priests, down to the time of Joseph ? Hadst thou a good reason for keeping this great fact from all thy chosen servants ? and if so, what was it ? If thou hadst no reason to the contrary, why didst thou not impart the information to them ? Was it because the Holy Ghost was unknown to thyself even, till less than two thousand years ago ?

As the name of the Holy Ghost is not even mentioned till the time of Joseph, is it not possible that Joseph dreamed him out at the same time that he dreamed out the paternity of Jesus ? If he was not the creation of Joseph's dream, was he not, at all events the creation of the party who invented the story or who wrote it ? Is not rather, Jehovah, the whole theory of the Trinity—three persons in one—an idea or myth borrowed by the early Christian Church, not from Judaism or anything that is in the older part of the Bible, but from the older pagan mythologies of India, Egypt, Persia, Greece, and many other heathen countries ? Did not the Brahmins have their trinity—Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva ? Had not Egypt her Osiris, Isis, and Typhon ?

Had not Persia and Chaldea their Ormuzd, Mithra, and Ahrimanes? Had not the Grecians their multiform deities, especially their *trias*, one, two, and three? Did not Plato teach a trinity long before Christianity had birth? Inasmuch, then, as thy ancient prophets and patriarchs knew nothing of any personage being connected with thee in forming a trinity, does it not look much as though after the idea of a son was entertained, the third person was also added to make up the regular trinity and to correspond with the popular systems of mythology then in vogue in the Eastern world? Under all the circumstances, is not the suspicion that the Holy Ghost is a myth—a mere invention of the human mind—a very natural one to be entertained? Is not the Christian absurdity that "one is three and three are one" utterly impossible for any being to comprehend unless he is a lunatic or of unsound mind?

Is it not a historical fact that nothing definite was known or believed about the existence of the Holy Ghost as a personality until late in the fourth century (381) at the Council of Constantinople, when for the first time in the history of the Christian Church, the doctrine of his personality was adopted as a dogma? Was not this after fifty years of fierce contention among the bishops of thy church as to whether thy son was *consubstantial* with thyself—whether he was the same being with thyself, or a separate personality?

Were not thirty-eight councils held to settle the vexed question of whether thyself and son were one person or two? Did not nineteen of these councils decide with Arius that thy son was not thyself, not equal in age, power, and majesty? and did not nineteen of the councils decide with Athanasius that thy son *was* equal to thyself and *was* thyself? Was there not great bitterness and contention at these councils of the bishops of the church in disputing this question? and did not the bishops bring soldiers with them to aid them by force of arms to maintain their views and to put down opposition by military power? Had the quarreling, fighting bishops any better facilities for knowing about thy personality than had thy patriarchs and prophets who saw thee face to face, back to back, and face to back, and who held converse with thee almost daily?

Was it not until after this warfare had raged fully fifty years that the personality of the Holy Ghost was first adopted? Previous to that time had not the Holy Ghost been regarded as *breath*? Is not the word in Greek which is translated Ghost, *pneuma*, which literally means *wind* or *breath*?

So is not the doctrine of the Son really older than that of the Holy Ghost? Is it not true, therefore, that the Son is older than the Holy Ghost?

Is it not true that although the council of 381 assumed to adopt the personality of the Holy Ghost as a dogma, it did not become the accepted faith of the Church for more than one hundred years afterward? and was it not by *brute force* that the doctrine was established?

Is it not true that the famous passage in 1 John, v., 7, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one," and which has so often been quoted as proof of the existence of the Holy Ghost, is not found in any Greek manuscript of the New Testament earlier than the fifteenth century? Is it not true also that it is found in no Latin manuscript of the New Testament earlier than the ninth century? Is it not true that the passage is found in none of the ancient versions? Is it not true that it was not cited by any of the Greek ecclesiastical writers in the earlier Christian centuries? Is it not true that it was not cited by any of the early Latin authors, even when the subject upon which it bears was under discussion? Was it not first cited by Virgilius Tap-sensis, a Latin writer of little credit, in the latter end of the fifteenth century, by whom it was probably invented?

Is not the passage referred to an absolute, out-and-out forgery. Is it not the basest kind of fraud to palm off that spurious quotation, the production of some zealous Athanasian, as thy word, or as part of the original version of the New Testament? Is it not upon this kind of manufactured testimony alone that the existence of the Holy Ghost as a personality rests? Is it not a sad commentary upon the intelligence of the human race that they have been so easily duped and "bamboozled" by such evidence as this?

Great Jehovah, let us return again to the subject upon

which we are anxious to gain more light than we now possess—the begetting of thy youngest son, Jesus. Had he an existence prior to the time he was begotten upon the person of that young Jewish maiden? Did his existence begin then? or had he existed from all eternity, with thyself, long before the stars, the suns, and the planets were called into being?

If he always existed, why was it necessary to beget him anew, and cause him to pass through the period of gestation, infancy, childhood and youth? If he always had existed, why bring him into existence *again*? Is it possible to bring a person into existence who has already existed millions of ages?

As thou didst not say anything about thy son, four or five thousand years ago, when thou wert in the habit of calling upon thy old favorite patriarchs and prophets, conversing with them as a man converses with his friend, and as thou didst never introduce him to those intimate friends of thine, and never even hinted to them that thou hadst a son, is it not very natural for us to conclude that he did not exist prior to the time when thou, or the Holy Ghost didst beget him, according to Matthew and Luke?

Jehovah, is not the begetting of offspring a process of a marked and peculiar character? On such occasions is not the animal passion of love excited to a very high degree? Does not the feeling, in fact, amount to animal *lust*, especially on the part of the male?

Is it possible for a male being to enter into the process of begetting offspring unless his animal passions are fully aroused? Has any male, whether of the human race or the lower orders of animals, ever had the ability to beget an offspring except by the direct and immediate agency of this sensuous passion of lust? Is what is styled "Platonic love," however pure and strong it may be, whether with the assistance of a female or without, capable of begetting an offspring? Is there anything, any feeling, any impulse, any sentiment, that, in this particular function, can be substituted for, or be made to take the place of, the lustful propensity in begetting children?

If this is true of the animal kingdom, if it is true of the human race, may we ask if the same rule holds not good

with the gods? We have heard much of the gods having their loves and sweethearts, of their having intercourse with females, both celestial and terrestrial, and having children by them—are they not governed in this exercise by similar feelings, impulses and passions as those which actuate the human race and the lower animals?

Art thou able to say how it was in this respect with the gods of India and Chaldea and Phœnicia and Greece? When they had sexual intercourse with the goddesses and the daughters of men, were they not actuated by the same sexual desire, the animal passion of love, as mortals are? Would this not have been strictly necessary in all cases to insure an offspring? Could there possibly have been an offspring without it?

To come nearer, now, to thy own experience: as our own eternal salvation depends upon our having the right kind of faith upon this very important subject, grant us the right and true information, and allow us to enquire with some degree of particularity in reference to this very interesting transaction: Wert thou, when thou didst beget thy son Jesus, actuated by the passion of sexual desire? Hadst thou not a strong, impulsive love for that young Jewish maiden? Was it not a marked case of "true inwardness" between thyself and the damsel?

Was she not remarkably pleasing in thy eyes at the time of that interview? Did she not seem more lovely to thee than all the other women in existence? Hadst thou not sought her from among the thousands of the damsels of thy people, and for this express purpose? Hadst thou not had thine eye upon her for some time previous to that particular interview, and for that special object?

Was thy love for the damsel as much more intense than the love a man feels toward a maiden under similar circumstances, as thy power and ability in other respects are greater than man's?

Was this feeling of love and attraction between the virgin and thyself mutual? Was she actuated by similar emotions with thyself? Was the interview equally pleasurable to both?

Was the effect of thy visit upon the young lady such as to produce a physical change upon her? Was she a virgin

subsequent to the interview in the same sense that she was previous to it?

Was she conscious of thy presence? or didst thou throw her into an unconscious condition, as is now often produced by such anaesthetics as ether and chloroform?

We trust, Jehovah, that thou wilt not deem us too inquisitive in a matter which may be thought to be no business of ours, but thy priests tell us that this act of begetting thy son was the grandest act thou ever didst perform, and that it was of more importance to the world of mankind than any other act that ever was performed. Are we, then, not justified in endeavoring to learn the whole truth? If ourselves and the whole world are to be saved by possessing the true faith in the birth, life, and death of thy son, should we not strive to obtain correct information, and all the information that can be obtained? Is there any better way to obtain knowledge of what thou didst than to ask thee about it? Are we not entitled to know all the truth that we can possibly learn? And are there any truths of greater importance than of thy own deeds, especially in all connected with thy great plan of human salvation?

We are not quite clear about the Holy Ghost, whether he was thee or not, whether thou and he are one, or two individuals. According to Matthew, was not the Holy Ghost solely the father of the infant Jesus? Did not thy angel, after the event had taken place, tell Joseph when asleep: "that which is conceived in her (Mary) is of the Holy Ghost"? Are we not to understand by this that the Holy Ghost was the father, and that thou hadst nothing to do with the paternity of the child? As, according to Matthew, Joseph did not dream anything about thy being present, are we not to conclude that thou wert not there, and hence that the child was none of thine?

But do we not get a different statement from Luke? Did not Gabriel, the grand Major-general of the angelic forces, appear unto the modest maiden and tell her all about it and just how the business was to be performed? Did he not assure her that she was highly favored among women? that among all the females of the earth she had found most favor

with thee and in thy sight? that she should conceive in her womb and bring forth a son that should be great? that he should possess the throne of David? and that to his kingdom there should be no end?

When the little inexperienced girl wished to know *how that could be*; how she could conceive and have a child, seeing she had not known a man, did not the Archangel proceed to enlighten her by saying, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the son of God"?

Now if Luke was correct in reporting the interview which took place between Gabriel and Mary; that the operation was carried out as the angel had indicated; if we can be assured that Luke knew precisely what he was talking about, and that he told just how the feat was accomplished; if we can be positive that his narrative of this most remarkable performance was not tampered with nor changed by any of the designing and unscrupulous disciples of Athanasius and other fraud-mongers of the "Fathers of the Church," as unfortunately was the case in thousands of instances—sometimes changing the language, and sometimes adding entirely new matter—if we can be sure that Luke's narration of Mary's vision passed down unscathed and unchanged through the ten succeeding centuries, during which time so much was done at writing, revising, changing, interpreting, forging, and variously modifying hundreds of gospels and epistles, and which were quarreled over, and fought over by almost numberless councils of partisan bishops, week after week, month after month, and, we may truthfully say, year after year—if, we ask, we can believe Luke's story to be the exact truth, are we not warranted in believing that both the Holy Ghost and thyself had a part in begetting Jesus?

Did not Gabriel say: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee"? By the *Highest* did he not mean thee? If he did not mean thee, whom did he mean? Did he not speak of the Holy Ghost and the Highest as being two personages, one "coming upon" the virgin and the other "overshadowing" her? Does it not follow, then, that there were three different persons

engaged in that act of begetting a son—the Holy Ghost, the Highest, and the little black-eyed maiden?

Jehovah, is it not a little curious, to look at the matter squarely in the face, that two members of a triune or three-headed deity, a three-bodied figure, who, we are told, has existed from all eternity, should operate in connection with a young girl to beget the third party or limb of the firm, the Godhead, the bachelor-trinity, or whatever it may be called? Is it not the most singular event that has transpired since the stars of heaven first sang together in blue vaulted space?

Is it not possible that, if the third member of the celebrated firm is eternal like thyself and had an existence from the earliest morning of time, that he also took a part in begetting himself? If he has been ever with thee and of thee, could he have been absent?

Is it not enough to confuse the clearest head that lives to understand how a being can beget himself? Is there not vastly more room here for faith than reason; for blind credulity than *good sense*?

As Luke is the only person who seemed to know anything about the *modus operandi* by which this little business was accomplished; as he is the only one handed down to us who entered into the subject with the slightest particularity of detail, and he but partially, is it not to be regretted that his gospel came so near being rejected in one of the councils of bishops that was convened in the fourth Christian century to decide which manuscripts were thy word and which were not, as to be admitted only by a single vote? Can we be positive that that vote was honestly counted, and that there was no fraudulent “returning board” that manipulated it on the principle of “eight to seven”?

If that one vote had not been counted, in making up Luke’s very slender majority, what would we have done about obtaining the facts in the case, about the Holy Ghost and thyself and the girl, Mary, getting up the little Jesus? Would we not have had to depend solely upon Matthew’s story about Joseph’s dream, and without knowing whether he dreamed it right or not? Is not the entire subject one of a very dreamy, visionary, mythological, improbable char-

acter, and such as could not be accepted as truth in this age of the world ? If it should be stated now, that a young woman held sexual intercourse with a ghost and was thereby made pregnant, without having connection with a male of the *genus homo*, would any sane person believe it? Was it any more probable or any more true nineteen hundred years ago ? If the word *Priest* had been used instead of "Ghost," would not the story have been far more probable, and far more in keeping with the experience of men, both in the past and in the present ?

Great Jehovah, perplexed as we are to understand who was the father of Jesus—whether thyself or the Holy Ghost; troubled as we are to comprehend how either possibly could have been; how an invisible, impalpable, immaterial ghost could fecundate a Jewish maiden, and an offspring be the result ; puzzled as we are to understand the mysteries pertaining to the composition of the celestial firm of which thou standest at the head; if to dispel all doubts and to step upon firm and positive ground, we are compelled to accept the teachings of the Christian Church, which claims to be founded upon thy infallible truth; if we are forced to accept the theory which it holds to be simple, lucid, beautiful, and altogether reasonable, that in making up a godhead of three persons one is three and three are one; that each member of the trinity is distinct yet not separate ; that thou art "very God," that the Holy Ghost is "very God," that the Son is also "very God," and that all three are absolutely *one* and the same being, does not the relationship existing between these three partners of thy firm and the Virgin Mary become an interesting study?

If, at the same time, thou art thyself, thy father, and thy son, does it not follow that thou art not only thy own father and thy own son, but also thy own grandfather and thy own grandson ?

If the Holy Ghost and the son are both co-existent with thyself in age and power, does it not follow that they are each thy brother, and that Jesus, who is at the same time thy father, thy grandfather, thy son and thy grandson, is also thy brother, and thou his ?

If Matthew and Luke were correct in the assertion that the Holy Ghost was the father of Jesus, and the Holy Ghost being thy brother, was not the young Jesus thy nephew and thou his uncle?

Then, in addition to thy being thy own father and grandfather, thy own son and grandson, art thou not thy own uncle and great-uncle, thy own nephew and great-nephew?

What relation, may we ask, did the Virgin Mary hold to thee and to the other members of thy firm? To begin with, as thou art the father of *all*, didst thou not stand in the same relation to the Jewish maiden? Was she not thy daughter and thou her parent?

As she was thy daughter and Jesus thy son, were they not brother and sister? and as thou and thy son were the same, was not Mary thy sister also? and was not thy connection with her an incestuous one?

After thou didst cohabit with her in the sexual embrace, as thou didst love her devotedly, and as she bore a son to thee, was she not thy wife, or concubine?

As she was the mother of Jesus, and as Jesus and thyself are one and the same, was she not thy mother?

Has not this Jewish maiden, Mary, by the magnates of the Church, been a million times called *the Mother of God*?

If, according to Matthew, and partly according to Luke, it was the Holy Ghost in his individual capacity that had connection with Mary in the process of "overshadowing,"—that it was he who was the father of Jesus—was not Mary thy sister-in-law?

In the same sense that she was the consort of the Holy Ghost, the same being thy brother, and thou being thy own son, was she not thy aunt?

Inasmuch as she was thy offspring, thy child—as are all human beings—and thyself and the Holy Ghost being the same, was she not thy niece?

As we have seen that thou art at the same moment thyself, thy father, and thy son, and as the Virgin was thy consort, or wife, is it not equally true that she was at the same time thy grandmother and thy granddaughter?

As thou art the father of all existences; as the Holy Ghost was thy brother and also thy son; as he and the son

were one and the same; as the Virgin was the consort and wife of the Holy Ghost; as the son was also thy brother and thou and he were one—does it not follow that Mary was thy cousin?

If, then, Mary was thy wife, thy sister, thy mother, thy daughter, thy grandmother, thy granddaughter, thy aunt, thy niece, thy sister-in-law, and thy cousin, is not the Catholic Church quite right in virtually placing her in the godhead, and in paying their highest adoration to her?

If she bears all these relations to the members of the godhead, or to a part of them, or to one of them only, is it not perfectly legitimate and proper that deific honors should be bestowed upon her, and that she should be as greatly revered as either limb or branch of the godhead?

Is not the Protestant Church greatly at fault in withholding divinity from this distinguished female? and are they not positively guilty of irreverence and blasphemy in denying her the honor and adoration, to which she is so justly entitled?

If that Jewish maiden was the “wife” of God and the “mother of God,” even if all the other forms of relationship are lost sight of, is it not a clear case of gross injustice on the part of thy servants and admirers that they have persistently refused to grant her an equal seat of honor with thyself in the great Christian godhead?

Should not the godhead have consisted of four persons instead of three? and should not the mother of all three have been placed first in position, first in honor, and first in worship?

Should not the term “Trinity,” meaning the Christian’s God, be changed to *quadrinity*? Should we not worship four instead of three?

Should thy mother, thy wife, thy sister, thy daughter, thy cousin, and thy sister-in-law be longer debarred a seat on the throne which is so justly her own?

Jehovah, how canst thou, with a tithe of the sense of justice which thou art credited with, placidly consent to see that worthy female who acted to thee the part of a wife, with all that the name implies, a mother, with all that the title is pregnant with, a sister, with all the endearing

qualities the relationship possesses, with all her other close connections to thee, how caust thou, we impatiently ask, consent to let century after century pass by without according to this excellent woman the divine honor, position, and distinction which thou willingly takest unto thyself, and which thou positively demandest shall be accorded thee ?

Are we not fully justified in the conclusion that there is something wrong in all this divinity business ? If there are three members in thy establishment, does not justice and reason require that there should be four ?

If the father is represented in the firm, should not also the mother ? If the husband, why not the wife ? If the son, why not the daughter ? Does not eternal justice demand the recognition of the female element in divinity as fully as the male ?

Is there any equity, beauty, logic, or sense in having three masculines in one concern—three bachelor gods to rule equally over men and women without any recognition being given or any justice being extended to the female part of existence—the wife, the mother, and the sister element ?

In fact, is not the Christian Deity a perfectly incongruous monstrosity—devoid of equality, devoid of consistency, devoid of perfection, devoid of harmony, devoid of beauty, devoid of all that is most lovable and adorable ?

Is it strange that there are many thousands who cannot honestly accept the Christian Deity and regard him as a perfectly just, a perfectly consistent, and a perfectly true being ?

Are we, who have given much thought to this intricate and mystical subject, and cannot possibly come to the same conclusion that many of those around us do, are we to blame, we repeat, if we are unable to see things pertaining to divinity in the same light as those who gulp down everything that their priests command them to do; without a remonstrance or a word of protest ?

Is it not right that our reason should be our guide on this subject as well as on all others which inevitably engage our attention. Is not reason our natural birthright, and is it not proper that we should use it on *all* occasions and upon *all* subjects ?

Have we not a perfect and natural right to distrust what-

ever we are demanded to accept as truth and which our enlightened reason cannot approve ?

Jehovah, we find it in thy word, and thy preachers often repeat it, that thy Son is a lamb; that he is the "Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world." Are we to understand from this that his father is a ram? that he is the ram that demands a divine sacrifice for the sins of the world?

Is there any animal in existence capable of begetting a lamb, except a ram? Could a woman, under any circumstances, give birth to a lamb?

If thy Son is absolutely a lamb, can we get away from the conclusion that thou art a ram? and was not his mother a ewe? Is this the reason why thy fondness for sheep is so much greater than for goats?

If thy Son is a lamb metaphorically speaking, only, art thou not a ram in the same metaphorical sense? Do not logic and consistency demand this much?

If thou canst not be called a ram, may not that sheepish character have been a real, or an assumed one of the Holy Ghost's? Was he not in the habit of metamorphosing himself in various shapes and styles—sometimes as a bird; again as a dove, sometimes as cloven tongues of fire, sometimes as a precious ointment, sometimes as a breath, sometimes as an inanimate substance, and sometimes as a mighty, rushing wind? Would it not also have been perfectly in keeping with his character to have presented himself as a ram—a heavenly ram?

Did not some of the nations who lived thousands of years ago worship a ram for their deity, and did he not have a lamb for a son? Had not the ancient Hindoos a god, Ram, who had a wife who strayed from him, and did he not pursue her to the Island of Ceylon? Was not this mythology believed in centuries before the world heard aught of thy having a wife or a son? If there is any beauty in originating this grand conception, does it justly belong to thee?

Was not Jupiter Ammon, the greatest deity with the Greeks, adorned with ram's horns? and was he not represented and worshiped in Lybia under the form of a ram? Does not the Greek word for Ammon, in one of its senses mean ram? Was it not held that he appeared to his wor-

shipers as a ram ? and did he not open a valuable fountain by stamping upon the ground with one of his feet ?

Was not the ram held sacred in Egypt, and especially in Mendes ? Was not the figure of Ammon, given in Kitto, with a ram's head and horns, holding in one hand the crozier, or what has inappropriately been called the "shepherd's or the apostolic crook," and in the other hand the *crux ansata*, the emblem of the male and female organs ? Were not sheep held sacred by his followers ? and was not a ram annually sacrificed in his honor, the hide being used as a covering to his image ?

Is there not a connection here, with the ram that was adored in the astrological mythology and worship of the Chaldeans, Persians, and other nations, in which the ram figured so extensively ?

According to many of the mythologies of early times, were not rams and lambs very much mixed up in them ? Can it be possible that the idea of thy own existence and of thy son's were derived from such a source ?

In, fact, is not thy existence, thy history, thy personality, thy godhead, thy relationships, with all the incongruities and absurdities connected with thy celestial firm, proof positive of its imperfect, human origin—that it sprung up in the days when ignorance and crude notions prevailed in the world ? Is it not time that intelligent men and women acquired higher, nobler, worthier, and truer conceptions of the Supreme Power of the Universe ?

Great Jehovah, in connection with the subject of thy incarnation and thy intercourse with an earthly female, with thy permission, may we spend a little time in examining the mythological beliefs which were taught and maintained by various pagan nations on the earth many hundreds of years before the story of thy own incarnation was ever mentioned by mortal lips ?

Was not the doctrine of the descent of Deity from heaven, of his cohabiting with daughters of men, particularly with virgins, thus producing an offspring that was an incarnation of himself and to thus become a savior of the world, strenuously taught by many of the ancient religions of the world ? and did not that theory in one form or another enter into

the mythologies of many of the older pagan nations from three to five thousand years ago ?

Was not the symbol of a virgin and child, and also the legend or tradition that the child was begotten by the great king of heaven, familiar in India, in China, in Chaldea, in Thibet, in Siam, in Phœnicia, in Egypt, in Syria, in Greece, in Scandinavia, and in many others of the older nations long, long ago, before Christianity was heard of in the world ?

In ancient India was it not taught over three thousand years ago that their God, Vishnu, one of the trinity with Brahma and Siva, descended from heaven and cohabited with a virgin and produced a semi-celestial son ? Was it not held by the Brahmins that this incarnation of divinity took place several times ? Was not Christna held to be the eighth incarnation, or Avatar, of this Hindoo God ?

According to the Brahminical legends which appear in the ancient sacred writings of the Hindoos, as brought to light by the studies and investigations of such Sanscrit scholars and philologists as Sir William Jones, Max Müller, J. Cockburn Thompson and Louis Jacolliot, was it not held that the mother of Christna, called Devanaguy, a virgin, was specially prepared by divine care for a visit from the God of heaven, Vishnu ? Was it not said that Vishnu appeared to her in a dream, and did he not declare to her the glory and distinction that awaited her ?

Does it not appear in the ancient Sanscrit that after the virgin had been duly prepared, and after she had been cruelly persecuted by the wicked Rajah of Madura, that Vishnu passed through the walls of the prison where she was confined, and did he not proceed to incarnate himself in connection with the virgin ? While she was engaged in prayer, were not her ears agreeably charmed with celestial music ? Was not her prison suddenly illuminated with the glory of heaven, and did not Vishnu appear to her in all the *eclat* of his divine majesty ? Did not the virgin fall into a profound ecstasy ? Was she not "overshadowed" and did she not conceive ?

Was not the period of gestation one of continued delight and enchantment to the virgin ? After her accouchment had taken place was she not removed by the power of

Vishnu to a sheepfold belonging to a relative of the virgin named Nanda, and were not the shepherds apprized of the birth of the young child ? Did they not prostrate themselves on the ground before the young demi-god and worship him ?

Was it not also held that when the tyrant of Madura learned of the birth of the remarkable child, and that his own throne would be in danger by the new comer, he took measures to have the young child destroyed ? Was it not held that the tyrant passed an edict that all the children within his states, that were born on the night that Christna was born, should be put to death ? To escape this cruel decree did not the virgin flee with her babe to the river Ganges, where the child was comparatively safe and beyond the reach of the wicked tyrant ?

Were not many miracles and wonderful works ascribed to Christna during the years of his youth and early manhood ? and was he not a favorite deity with the women of the country ? Before he arrived at his majority did he not commence his mission in traveling over the country preaching to the people ? Did he not have active and frequent contests with the evil spirits which rose up to oppose him ?

Did he not surmount dangers, and did he not show by the numerous miracles which he performed that he possessed divine power ? Did he not gather around himself a band of disciples who followed him as he traveled to and fro over the country ? and were not his disciples greatly devoted to him ? Did he not teach the populace excellent morals and the most elevated maxims commendatory of upright conduct and a good life ?

Finally, was he not basely put to death by bad men who were his enemies, and was his body not crucified upon a tree near the river Ganges ? Was not his memory fondly and affectionately revered by numerous thousands who believed in him in all parts of that populous country ?

Jehovah, was it not much the same with Buddha, the great Reformer and Savior, who is held by his followers to have lived in India some twenty-five hundred years ago ? After numberless incarnations under different names and titles, is it not held by his disciples that, after great preparation on

his part, as well as on the part of his mother, Maya, she was impregnated in a miraculous manner without the aid of a male of the human race ?

Did not Maya have a remarkable dream, in which the deity from heaven descended in the form of a white elephant and entered her womb, when she conceived, and, ten months afterwards, without coming in contact with a man, gave birth to a son, who, upon coming to maturity, proved to be the greatest being that had ever lived ?

Did not this personage, to whom was given various titles and appellations, as Bodhisattva, Sakyamuni, Gautama Buddha, etc., lead a most remarkable life ? Did he not withdraw himself from the world, and, by a severe course of abstinence, penance, ascetic habits, fasting, humiliation and devotion, prepare himself for the great mission he had to perform—the teaching of the truths of salvation and happiness to the nations around him ?

Did he not spend a long life in teaching the most beautiful morals ? Did he not inculcate the strictest self-denial and abstinence from vain and earthly pleasures ?

Did he not, according to the belief of his ardent and devout admirers, perform numerous miracles and deeds which an ordinary human being could not perform ? In a fierce contest with the evil spirits of darkness did he not signally triumph over them, although they opposed him in immense numbers ?

Did not the holy life and teachings of this remarkable character secure a greater following than has ever been known in the world before or since ? Did he not have millions of disciples and followers in India, China, Tartary, Mongolia, Siam, Burmah, Thibet, and Ceylon ?

Though he may have been a myth, though many of the events claimed for him in his career were purely imaginary, did he not absolutely establish one of the most remarkable systems of religion that the world has ever known ? Has it not been a peaceful, beneficent religion, imparting happiness and consolation to many millions of human beings, without showing a disposition to engage in the business of shedding blood and spreading war and desolation over the face of the earth ?

If numbers, devoutness, sincerity, peacefulness, and perseverance on the part of its devotees are marks of genuineness and truthfulness of a system of belief, is not the religion of Buddha the most truthful and the most perfect of any that has yet been devised by man? Does the system said to have been inaugurated by thy Son begin to compare with it?

In the enumeration of believers and followers, has not Buddhism greatly outranked all the other systems of religion that the world has known? After having for twenty-five centuries the greatest following by far of any system, are there not on the earth to-day fully four hundred millions of human beings who devoutly believe in the purity of the life and teachings of their adored Reformer, Savior and Redeemer?

Has not this religion, while its influence has been peaceful and humane, exercised a more potent and extensive rule over the lives and conduct of men than any other system of religion that the race has ever embraced?

Canst thou say, Jehovah, that a purer code of morals, a life of greater self-denial, or a greater devotion to the human race, was taught and lived and enjoined by thy own son Jesus, than was at least five hundred years earlier—and during a much longer life—lived and taught by Buddha?

In view of the miraculous birth and the humble, devoted life of this wonderful personage, of the purity of his life and doctrine, of the unprecedented influence which his doctrines have exercised in several of the most populous nations of the world, and which has been continued without interruption for nearly three thousand years, may we ask, Jehovah, whether thou hast personally ever had much to do with that religion or with the people who have believed in it?

Where wert thou, Jehovah, through all those thousands of years? Wert thou so occupied and annoyed with the Jews, first, and then with the Christians, who were almost constantly engaged in war, bloodshed and carnage, that thou hadst but little time or attention to give to the Mongolians and Indians, or to the numerous millions who acknowledged the religion of Buddha, that thou hadst to leave them to the tender care and protection of the pagan gods? Hast thou ever been known among them? During the passing centu-

ries that they have existed hast thou ever revealed thyself to them, or did they ever hear the name of Jehovah mentioned?

Is it not singular how such a continued prosperity, such a peaceful rule, such a long continued reign of one system of faith should for thousands of years prevail in a large portion of the most populous parts of the earth without any attention or supervision from thee or from thy Son?

Does not this striking fact go far to prove that thy presence and supervision are not absolutely necessary, either in the continuance of nations or in the success and perpetuity of a grand system of religion?

Have not the pagan religions and the pagan nations been as well preserved, and have not their religions been followed out quite as peacefully and as successfully as have the religions and nations which thou hast taken under thy immediate control and guidance? In short, have not those nations who have managed to get along without thy aid and presence succeeded about as well as those which have been favored with both?

Great Jehovah, let us return to the subject of gods and virgins—of their intercourse with each other—and make a few further inquiries of thee upon this heavenly theme. Were not the virgin Isis and her god-begotten child Horus worshiped and adored in Egypt three thousand to five thousand years ago?

Was not the virgin Ishtar greatly revered in Babylon hundreds of years before the introduction of Christianity into the world, and did not the legend hold that she was impregnated by a god from heaven, and among her titles was she not called “Mother of the Gods,” and “The Celestial Mother”? Does not Gen. Rawlinson, the distinguished English antiquarian and explorer give an account of this?

Had not the Assyrians a goddess—a virgin greatly adored by them—by the name of Ri (nearly the same as the last syllable in Mary’s name)? Was she not believed to be the mother of a child who was begotten by a god, and without the assistance of a masculine of the human race? Was she not also called “The Celestial Mother”? Was not this hundreds of years prior to the Christian era?

Was not the virgin Myrrha held by the Grecians to have become the mother of Adonis by having sexual connection with one of the gods? Was not her son in many respects fully equal to the son of thy favorite, Virgin Mary?

Was it not held by the ancient Egyptians, more than three thousand years ago, that their demi-god Æsculapius was begotten by a god upon the virgin Coronis, and was he not for many centuries held in high veneration? Was it not held that, after he was born, his virgin mother secreted him on the Mount of Myrtles, and that he was found by a shepherd or goat-herd Aristhenes, and that the goat-herd would have conveyed the infant to his own home had he not perceived, in lifting the infant from the ground, that his head was encircled with fiery rays, by which he knew the child was of divine parentage?

Was not Ceres in a similar manner held to be the virgin mother of Osiris, and that he was begotten by the "Father of all Gods"?

Was not the figure of a virgin with a divine child in her arms found sculptured in the ruins of the ancient temples thousands of years ago? Have not such figures, commemorative of the worship of the virgin, been found among the antiquities in nearly every ancient nation?

Was not Celestine held to be the virgin mother of the crucified Zulis, or Thulis? Was not Semele in the same manner held to be the virgin mother of the Egyptian Bacchus?

Was not Prudence thus the mother of one of the Herculeses, Slings-man of the demi-god Yu, in China, and Mayenne of Hesus of the Druids? Were these not all pure and chaste virgins?

Did not Æschylus, more than five hundred years before Christ, write about the virgin Io, chaste and pure, who gave birth to a son without holding connection with a male of the human race?

In the Grecian mythology, were not many of the old gods greatly distinguished by their fondness for females, and were not their amours and their acts of sexual connection the subjects of poems and songs for many centuries?

Did not the god Saturn, with the goddess Ops, on Mount

Ida, beget Jupiter, Neptune, Juno, Diana, Ceres, and others, male and female?

Was not the supreme god Jupiter particularly distinguished for his love attachments and for the number of children he begot by various females? Did he not beget Apollo by the virgin Latonia, who bore him twins; Mercury, his favorite messenger, by Maia; Vulcan, Mars and Hebe by his sister and wife Juno; Bacchus by Semele; Æolus by Acesta; Hercules by the Virgin Alemena; Amphion by Antiope; the Grecian Æsculapius by Danae; and the nine heavenly muses by Mnemosyne, besides other offspring too numerous to mention?

Did not this amorous god evince as much fondness for the female sex as do males of the human race? and did he not, in carrying out his schemes in this direction, exhibit as much craft, intrigue and perseverance, as men often do when seeking to gratify their sexual passions?

Did not the other gods pattern faithfully after their king and ruler? Did not Sol and Clymene beget Phæton? Was not Latonia the daughter of Cœus and Phœbe? Did not Cingras get Adonis of Myrrha? Was not Aurora the daughter of Terra and Titan? Were not Cœlus and Hecate the parents of Janus? Was not Triton the offspring of Neptune and Amphitrite? Were not Oeson and Alimede the parents of Jason or Thesus? Was not Orpheus the product of Apollo and Calliope, and Achilles of Peleus and Thetes?

Was not the uncomely Pan the child of Mercury by Penelope? Did not Mercury and Venus produce Hermaphrodites? Did not Mars cohabit with Cistones and procure Tereus? In the same way was not Momus the son of Nox and Somnus?

Were not all these gods, with the stories or legends about their connections with celestial and terrestrial females and of their begetting sons and daughters, almost without number, all taught and strongly believed in from five hundred years to fifteen hundred years before thou hadst connection with the Virgin Mary and begat thy son Jesus?

Jehovah, in view of the many nations in the old pagan world who, for five hundred years, for a thousand years, and for fifteen hundred years before the day when Matthew

and Luke say thou hadst intercourse with the Jewish virgin, Mary, when thou didst consummate the grand plan of salvation of the human race, which from the most remote ages thou hadst meditated and cogitated upon, is it not very singular how completely thy grand scheme was anticipated by those same superstitious pagans ?

As they preceded thee by many hundreds of years in the business of incarnation, and with the coöperation of a daughter of earth, to beget a celestial son, partaking of the character of deity, does it not appear that the heathen world got the start of thee in the matter, and that thou wast under the necessity of copying from them ?

Are not the accounts of the heathen gods holding sexual intercourse with the heathen virgins, and thus producing heathen sons of gods, more full, more definite, and equally as authentic, to say the least, as are the accounts of thy own exploits in the same line ?

Are not the legends in relation to the manner in which Christna, Buddha, and the other sons of God which were miraculously brought into existence, fully as reliable as the dream which Matthew says Joseph had, or as the vision which Luke says the Virgin had ?

Is there not a great amount of vagueness, mysticism, unreasonableness, improbability, and impossibility, as well as similarity in all these myths and fabulous legends that detracts very greatly from their credibility and reliability ?

Is it not evident that, like the various systems of religion which men have believed in—each one being more or less like those which preceded it, possessing much the same mysticisms, fabulous legends about miraculous origin, having the same or similar dogmas and points of belief—this dogma of an immaculate conception, of a god holding sexual intercourse with a young woman and begetting another god, as in the case of the Christian religion, like the previously existing systems, has been borrowed or taken from the earlier creeds ?

Is it not far more probable that the earlier Christians appropriated this darling theory than that thou shouldst be under the necessity of following in the same steps which thy competitors had pursued for more than a thousand years

before, and to be indebted to them or to their inventors and creators for a model by which to form thy own plans and purposes ?

Does it not argue a lack of originality, a great want of the inventive faculty, both on thy part and on the part of those who devised and compiled the system of religion called Christianity to take almost the same means to get up a son, agent, and representative that had been used by thy predecessors of the superstitious and unenlightened pagans ?

Is not this more apparent and striking when we discover that in Christianity, not only the idea of a begotten son of God is a borrowed one, but also that every dogma, every creed, every sacrament, every ordinance, and almost every rule and regulation which the Christian Church possesses to-day, or has possessed within the last eighteen hundred years, has been absolutely borrowed or stolen from those older pagan systems ?

Is not the belief in a trinity in the godhead a pagan dogma which had an existence in heathen nations for thousands of years, but did not exist in Judaism ? We have seen most clearly that the begetting of a divine son upon the person of an earthly woman was decidedly a pagan invention, and was not the belief in the crucifixion of the son of God as a penalty or a propitiation for the sins of the world equally as much of pagan origin ?

Are there not distinct accounts of more than a dozen Redeemers, Saviors, or Sons of God, who have been crucified for the good of mankind, to secure the pardon of their sins, or to appease the anger of an offended God ? And did not all these crucifixions take place, or purport to have taken place, hundreds of years before thou wast said to have begotten a son and caused him to be put through the same cruel process ?

From the investigations of Godfrey Higgins, Sir William Jones, Sir J. Cockburn Thompson, Dr. Thomas Inman, Max Müller, Louis Jacolliot, and others, do we not find that it was claimed that Christna, the son of the Hindoo God, was crucified for the benefit of mankind from five hundred to one thousand years before thy son was placed upon the cross ?

Was not the same legend held also by millions of people of the divine Sakia of the Hindoos, the Chinese, the Siamese, the Thibetians, and other Asiatic nations, fully five hundred years earlier than thy own son?

Was not Thamuz of Syria crucified, or held to have been, more than a thousand years before Jesus was?

Was not Wittoba of the Tilingonese, according to the traditions, crucified between five hundred and six hundred years before the crucifixion on Calvary? Were not the nail holes in the feet and hands of this demi-god often portrayed and held up for the pious adoration and sympathy of his worshipers? Was he not believed in Lombardy, Travancore, and other sections of Southern Italy?

Was not Prometheus held to have been crucified in Greece? Did not Æschylus put the entire legend in a poem, and was it not as a drama played upon the stage in Athens—a representation of the crucifixion of the god Prometheus being given in view of the audience—and this five hundred years before thy son was said to have been crucified?

Was not Quirinus of Roime, according to tradition, crucified over five hundred years before the birth of thy son?

Was not the divine Hesus of the Druids held to have been crucified more than eight hundred years before the Christian era?

Was not Quexalcote of Mexico represented as having been put to death on the cross for the good of mankind? In the story of his life-sufferings are there not most striking correspondences between him and thy son?

In a similar manner was it not held that Thulis of Egypt, Indra of Thibet, Iao of Nepaul, Attys of Phrygia, Crite of Chaldea, Bali of Orissa, Mithra of Persia, not to mention others, were severally crucified as redeemers or saviors of men; that they gave up their lives in this way to placate the wrath of God and to atone for the sins of the human race? Were not all these crucifixions held to have taken place more than five hundred years before thou caused thy dear son to be put to death in this cruel manner?

Whether these crucifixions ever actually took place, or whether they were only mythical theories and traditions on

the part of those who taught them, is not one thing made most clear, that the crucifixion idea is decidedly pagan in its origin; that it was taught by the priests of pagan systems, and believed in by many millions of confiding pagan worshipers many centuries before it is claimed that thou and thy son decided to use the same means for the eternal good of mankind? Is it not most singular that in this most important of all dogmas, the crucifixion of thy son, thou wert also compelled to take up the worn-out and antiquated theories of the pagan world? Is it not possible that thou or the designers of the system were unable to get up anything new and original with which to save the world and to plant a new system of religion?

Are we not forced to believe that thou couldst not devise a better and more rational system, and wert compelled to pattern after and adopt the obsolete and crude vagaries of ignorant pagans away back in the dark, crude ages of antiquity?

If thou wert actuated by the desire and purpose to take some steps by which thou couldst find it possible to forgive the human race for falling into the trap which thou didst set for them, in the matter of the forbidden fruit and the wily serpent, is it not passing strange that thou couldst devise no way except to follow in the track which the devotees of paganism had pursued a thousand years before?

Would it not be naturally expected that a deity who possessed originality and inventiveness sufficient to plan and execute a boundless Universe, to enact all the laws pertaining to matter and force; of attraction, gravitation, chemical affinity, of light, heat, electricity, magnetism, sound, color, and of the innumerable forms and combinations of matter and force, in invisible and visible conditions, comprising all the varied forms of vegetable and animal life, could devise as well, a feasible plan by which he could restore friendly relations between his creatures and himself without finding it necessary to take at second hand an old crude, monstrous, repulsive, barbarous, pagan system of first begetting a son upon the body of a female, and then putting him to a cruel death to produce a spirit of forgiveness in his own mind? Is not this a fair presentation of the case according to the

representations made by those who claim to speak in thy name? Canst thou deny a word of it?

On the other hand, is it not far more probable and far more *true* that thou hadst nothing to do with all this plagiarism of pagan myths and absurdities, and that the entire business of getting up the Christian system was performed by a designing priesthood who, in building a new religion, used for the structure the debris and waste timber which had been employed in similar structures, and who, in order to make the new system popular with those who still adhered to the old, incorporated into the new many of the creeds, rites, forms, and sacraments which existed in the older systems?

Now, Jehovah, if these things are so; if it be true that the principles of the Christian religion are borrowed from paganism (if it is not so, wilt thou be kind enough to tell us), is there the slightest harm in the people's knowing it? Is it not far better for men to know the truth, regardless of whatever system it may effect, than that generation after generation should pass away indifferent to errors and falsehood?

The Christian religion is either original or it is borrowed. Is not the proof positive that it is the latter? Do not the facts we have cited, and many others of a similar character, prove it to be a borrowed system?

We ask again, ought we not to know the truth and look it boldly in the face? Can there be any good in keeping truth in the background, and setting up myths and fables in its place? In this age of increased knowledge, ought we not to understand as fully as possible the facts about the system of religion which demands our adhesion and adoration? If we find that we have been in error, and that our teachers have told us falsely, ought we not to turn to the truth and embrace it with all our hearts?

Does not the crude idea that thou art an anthropomorphic being, with all the passions and impulses possessed by physical man, occupying but a single point in the Universe at a given time, with crudity and human attributes sufficient to engage in sexual intercourse with mortal females, and thus beget offspring, illy comport with the progressive idea of Deity that is a universal principle or power that pervades

alike all parts of the limitless Universe—as much in the orbs so distant that they cannot be descried by the most powerful telescopes as on our own globe ?

Is it not absolutely impossible and crudely absurd to think that this universal power or principle which pervades all space, and hence cannot be a person or an individuality, could cohabit with women and become the father of sons and daughters?

Do not those who hold this crude conception of thee greatly wrong thee? Are they not virtually blasphemous and sacrilegious ? Do not these retain much of the old spirit of fetishism and idolatry to which men were bound in the ages of darkness thousands of years ago ?

Is it not time that these crude ideas were discarded by intelligent people, and that they had grander and truer conceptions of the Supreme Power of the Universe than they have hitherto entertained ?

Great Jehovah, the cases of divinely-begotten sons, already considered, which are analogous to the marvelous conception of thy own son, were myths and traditions that existed in the world from five hundred years to twelve hundred years, and more, before thy son was heard of among men. With thy permission we will take a view of a few cases which are dated about the same time that Jesus is said to have made his advent on earth.

Let the first one be Apollonius of Tyana in Cappadocia. Is it not related of him by his biographers that he was born a few years before Jesus, and that he lived twenty or thirty years after it is claimed that thy son ascended into the upper atmosphere ?

Was he not in many respects fully equal to Jesus? and was it not claimed that his conception was quite as remarkable?

Did not Philostratus write his biography in full ? and did not also Sir Godfrey Higgins give minute details of his career, and indicate numerous points of similarity between Apollonius and Jesus ?

Was not the advent of Apollonius foretold to his mother by an angel who appeared unto her?

According to tradition, did not his mother, while gathering flowers in a meadow, fall asleep and dream that she was surrounded by a circle of swans? and did not the clapping of their wings awaken her, whereupon she gave birth to Apollonius?

After the child had grown to be a youth, and had attended school at the far-famed seat of learning, *Ægæ*, and had applied himself closely to study, did he not subsist entirely upon fruits and vegetables, using only water for drink?

Did he not let his hair grow long and untrimmed? Did he not go barefooted? Did he not generously divide the fortune that was left him with an erring brother, and other needy relatives?

When he left Tyana and retired to the celebrated temple of *Æsculapius* at *Ægæ*, did not the fame of his wisdom spread abroad over the land, and was he not looked upon as possessing light from on high? Did not people flock to him from all directions to listen to his words of wisdom?

In order to devote himself entirely to divine things, did he not resolve to abstain from the society of women, and not to enter the marriage relation? Did he not condemn sexual pleasures as sinful and debasing?

Did he not at one time keep silence, and not utter a word for the term of five years? Was not this period passed in silent meditation, study, and devotion?

Was it not claimed for him that he performed many wonderful miracles? Did he not feed the hungry, heal the sick, the lame, and the blind, and was it not asserted that he even raised persons from the dead?

Did he not travel from city to city, and from country to country, speaking words of wisdom and instruction to the multitudes who flocked to hear him? Did they not regard him as the wisest man who had ever lived upon the earth? Did he not have devoted disciples, the most prominent among whom was his beloved Damis? Were not the morals he taught of the purest character? and was it not his object in all cases to make mankind better and happier?

Were there not striking resemblances between the works which he performed and those which Jesus performed?

Among the miracles attributed to him, did he not cast out devils? Did he not read the thoughts of those who gathered around him to listen to his words?

Is it not said that he caused a tree to bloom by miraculous power? Was it not claimed that he stayed a plague that was decimating the people?

Did he not establish a school at Ephesus, in Greece where he expounded the questions of morality, and taught the philosophy of the ancient Pythagoras? Did he not spend a long life in teaching his fellow beings, and in performing acts of self-denial? Was he not clad in the simplest manner, his food the plainest, and did he not deny himself all luxuries and sensual pleasures?

While there is some disagreement as to the manner of his death, was it not claimed by his disciples that he was crucified; that he rose from the dead, and was finally taken up into heaven?

Although it is quite probable that exaggerated claims were set up relative to Apollonius, and that he performed deeds that no person has ever performed, is not his life and career far better authenticated by history than is the life and existence of Jesus?

While all that pertains to the latter is found in the writings of the four so-called Evangelists—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, whose writings cannot be shown to have been in existence before the second century, cannot the existence of Apollonius be much better demonstrated?

Was he not known to Nero, Vespasian, and Titus, and did not the last two give him frequent audience, and confer honor upon him? Did they not consult him upon many subjects, and did they not hold him in great respect?

Did not the cruel Emperor Domitian, when he came into power, become jealous of the influence of Apollonius, and throw him into prison?

After his death, were not great honors paid to his memory? Did not the Emperor Aurelian treat the citizens of Tyana with unusual leniency because of the regard which he entertained for Apollonius, whose birth-place Tyana was?

Did not the Emperor Adrian preserve a collection of the writings of Apollonius in his palace at Antrim? Did not

the Emperor Caracalla cause a temple to be erected and dedicated to the memory of Apollonius ? Did not the Emperor Alexander Severus place his statutes in his imperial palace with those of distinguished ancients ?

Did not the Empress Julia engage Philostratus, an eminent writer of Athens, to gather all the facts in relation to Apollonius, and to write them in a book ? Was not the volume so written and completed before one hundred years had passed after the death of the subject treated ? Have not these writings of Philostratus come down to our own time ? and is he not accepted as authority on matters pertaining to Apollonius ? Did not the early fathers of the Christian Church admit the existence of Apollonius, while they attributed the marvelous power he possessed to the influence of evil spirits ?

If the teachings of Apollonius had been accepted by the nations of Europe as the basis of their religion, would not his name stand, to-day, throughout Christendom, as high, and would not his fame be as great, as that of Jesus of Nazareth ? And would he not now be regarded as the great teacher and savior of men ?

Did not Apollonius live earlier than Jesus ? and did he not live later ? Did he not possess greater learning ? Did he not travel in far more cities and countries ? Did he not devote more than ten times as many years to teaching and instructing his fellow men as did Jesus ? Were not his morals and instructions as pure and as unexceptionable as those of Jesus ? Were not his powers and abilities, in every sense of the words, as great ? In short, we again ask had he been accepted as generally as was the man of Galilee, would he not now be regarded as one of the most remarkable characters and one of the purest teachers that ever walked the earth ?

Contemporaneous with Apollonius did there not exist another distinguished character who had a large following and was believed by his disciples to have been of divine origin — Simon Magus, sometimes called the Magician of Samaria ? Were not most remarkable deeds ascribed to him ?

Was it not claimed for him that he performed miracles,

such as controlling the elements, transforming himself into the appearance of other men and animals, rendering himself invisible, walking on the water and in the air, passing through and sitting in flames uninjured, passing through mountains, causing trees to suddenly spring up in desert places, flinging himself from high precipices without injury, creating a man from the atmosphere, raising the dead, walking through the streets accompanied by spirits of the dead, etc., etc. ?

Was he not also a great moral teacher ? and did he not instruct his hearers about the nature of deity, and of their proper intercourse with their fellow men, as well as of the nature of evil spirits ?

Did he not build up a great name for himself ? and was not his memory retained long after his death ? Was not his existence recognized by the writers of the New Testament, and did they not seek to evade the force of his competitorship by ascribing his power to sorcery and the aid of evil spirits ? Is not this about what might be expected of competitors in business ?

In all ages of the world, have not teachers, reformers, prophets, incarnated sons of God, messiahs, redeemers, and saviors, arisen in great numbers, and have they not attracted more or less attention, according to the conditions and circumstances that surrounded them ?

Is there any reason why Jesus, the carpenter's son, should be considered the greatest of them all ? Was not his ministry much shorter than that of many of the others ? and were the deeds he performed more remarkable than those of many of the others ? Were not the morals taught by the others just as pure and just as elevated as those taught by him ? Was not the celebrated "Golden Rule" taught by many of the other redeemers, and centuries earlier ?

If superiority in numbers of followers and disciples prove superiority of power and divinity, should not Buddha be pronounced greatly superior to Jesus ? Are not the followers of Brahma, of Confucius, or of Mohammed about equal in numbers to the followers of Jesus ?

Is not the existence of Jesus quite as uncertain and as mythical as that of any of the others, and far more so than

several of them? Are there not strong grounds for questioning the reality of his existence, while this is not the case with numbers of the others of the world's redeemers?

Was not the religion of Jesus much slower in its early growth than was Buddhism, Mohammedianism, and the religions instituted by other leaders and reformers? Were there not more serious disputations and contentions in the early Christian centuries as to whether Jesus had a real existence, or whether a merely spiritual one, than was the case with any others of the great religious leaders? Was that the case with Buddha or Mohammed?

Will it not be far better for mankind to become enlightened by the laws of nature and the truths of science, and thus be able to be their own saviors, than to place implicit faith in any of the mythical characters who lived in the long ago, and had no better means of arriving at truth than now exists in the world?

Great Jehovah, we have already made some enquiries of thee respecting thy partner and companion the Holy Ghost; and before we get too far away from the subject, we would respectfully ask still a few more questions relative to the same mysterious personage.

From our stupidity, or lack of spiritual discernment, it is extremely difficult for us to understand the great puzzler how one can be three and three one—how one god can consist of three distinct personages, and these three at the same time be but the one god. We have tried to comprehend it, but cannot see that we make any headway in our efforts in that direction, and we fear that we never shall be able to overcome the difficulty in the future, any better than at the present time.

As compared with thy description of thyself in the Old Testament, where thou never madest the slightest allusion to a Holy Ghost, or to any person, or third part of a god, connected with thyself, is not that mysterious, weird, fanciful, fabulous, indescribable something, or nothing, comparatively a new idea or modern improvement upon thy former self? and is it not perfectly legitimate to make some enquiries as to the mythical idea, and to learn, if possible,

whether it is a regular outgrowth of the old Jewish monotheistic idea of God, or whether it was borrowed out and out from the Oriental nations, without any connection with the Judaism of the old Testament?

As this Holy Ghost is represented as appearing in various forms and styles, sometimes as a dove or bird, sometimes as a spirit, sometimes as a breath, sometimes as cloven tongues of fire, sometimes as a mighty rushing wind, not to mention several other forms and modifications, may we not enquire if there are not found in the pagan religions of the Old World, the sources whence these various notions and myths were obtained?

Is not the appearance of the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit, as a *dove or a pigeon* an old tradition in several of the oriental mythologies and systems of religion?

Did not the dove stand for the third person in the Trinity in the religions of ancient India thousands of years ago? Does not Sir Godfrey Higgins give an account of this in his *Anacalypsis*?

When a person was baptized in the Brahminical religion, was it not held that he was "born again," and that the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descended and settled upon him?

In ancient Rome was not a dove or a pigeon held to be a symbol or emblem of the female procreative energy? Was it not claimed that the dove accompanied the goddess Venus?

Was not the dove held sacred by the Grecian oracles and worshipers long before it was introduced into the Christian system? Did not the dove also enter into the romantic eclogues of ancient Syria? In the Syrian temple at Hieropolis was not Semiramis represented with a dove on her head, and this centuries before the dove was said to have descended upon the head of thy son?

As a *Holy Breath*, did not the ancient Hindoo tradition teach that the creative spirit moved upon the face of the waters of the great deep? Was it not held that this Holy Breath imparted vitality to every created thing with which it came in contact? Was not this conception of the Holy Breath—the principle of life—though older, synonymous with the Christian idea of the Holy Ghost?

Among those Orientals was not the ceremony of imparting the Holy Ghost *by breathing* often practiced? Did not the priests blow their breath upon the children brought to them, and in this way was it not believed that the Holy Spirit was imparted to the young candidates for heaven?

As a *Holy Wind* did not the Orientals regard the vitalizing power which proceeded from the mouth of their Supreme Deity? Was not this idea of Holy Wind recognized by several of the older systems of religion?

Is not the Greek word *pneuma*, which is translated *ghost*, also frequently translated *wind* and *spirit*?

Was not the ancient Hermes of Egypt regarded as a personification or breath proceeding from the Great Divine Being? Were not wind and spirit often interchangeable terms?

In the form of *Tongues of Fire* did not the old Orientals speak of the spirit or influence which proceeded from their Deity. Were not tongues of fire a conception of the Buddhists in connection with their incarnated god three thousand years ago? Was not Buddha often represented in a symbol of glory—a tongue of fire upon his head?

Was not the visible manifestation of the Holy Ghost or Spirit by fire a sacred tradition among the Hindoos, the Celts, the Druids, and the Etrurians? When this Holy Ghost or influence was rendered apparent to the perception of the masses was it not usually in the form of fire or the dove? Was not the ancient custom among the Hindoos, the Chaldeans, and the Persians, of making offerings and oblations to their superior deities under the form and symbol of solar fire a very natural one, and whence was derived the Christian idea of Holy Fire or Holy Ghost?

Did not the ancient Celts believe that the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit or influence was imparted by the *laying on of hands*, and was not that ceremony often used among them?

Was not a *Baptism* of the Holy Ghost and fire used by the ancient religionists? Did not the Tuscans and the Etrurians claim to baptize with wind, with fire (ghost), as well as with water? Did they not use as symbolical for the Holy Spirit, gas, gust, or wind? In those ancient countries were not young children taken to the priests, who, before their

holy or sacred fire, baptized them with the holy spirit, by the process of sprinkling holy water upon them from a vessel made of the "Holme" wood ?

Did not the idea of a Holy Spirit, Holy Ghost, Holy Fire, Holy Breath, and Holy Influence pervade many of the Oriental religions? and did not this belief run back into remote antiquity ?

Do we not find here, we repeat, the source whence the Christian sect obtained the conception ? As the pagan religions of the East possessed a Holy Ghost, and as thy chosen people knew nothing of any such personage or influence, and as thou never, either to thy patriarchs or prophets, gave the slightest intimation of any such individuality—is it not very natural to conclude that the idea was borrowed from those pagans rather than from the revelations which thou madest of thyself to thy chosen people ? Is not the Rev. John Miller, now being tried for heresy by the Presbytery at Princeton, N. J., quite correct when he pronounces the whole idea of the Holy Ghost a mere rhetorical flourish, and the doctrine of the *Trinity* a borrowed paganism or Platonism ?

May we ask if thou always hadst a Holy Ghost with thee, and, if he ever formed a part of thy person and being, how it is that thou never saw fit to give even a slight intimation of it when thou so frequently held intimate conversations with thy old favorites, the patriarchs and prophets ? Why didst thou leave it for the pagans to devise and study out ? Is not the Holy-Ghost-idea wholly of pagan origin, and, we again ask, is not paganism the only source whence Christians obtained it ?

Is it not precisely the same with the idea of a Trinity ? As thou saidst nothing about a trinity in the days when thou didst hold intercourse with thy patriarchs and prophets, and as the nations called pagan did have their triune gods—their regular trinities—their incarnated gods and sons of gods, thousands of years ago, long before Christianity was thought of in the world, is it not a very safe and correct conclusion to come to that these innovations upon thy revelations are wholly from the pagans? that they never came from thee, directly nor indirectly ?

In like manner has not Christianity borrowed a large share of her stock-in-trade—her dogmas, creeds, rites, sacraments, and ceremonies—from the same pagan sources ? This being the case, is it not perfectly right that the people should understand it, and that the world should not continue to grope along in darkness and error in regard to this important matter ? If Christianity has appropriated all these delusions from the older Oriental religions, is it not better that the world has the truth presented to it?

Great Jehovah, we have seen that the incarnation of thyself in the person of thy son Jesus was not original nor new with the Christian Church, for incarnated sons of gods were common among the pagans for a thousand years before the beginning of the Christian era.

We find too that Redeemers and Saviors of men were not at that time a new idea in the world, for at least forty saviors, real or imaginary, had existed long previous to the time when Jesus is said to have made his advent into the world.

We also find that he was far from being the first that was sacrificed as an atonement, or as a propitiation, for the sins of the world; that lie was not by any means the first one of the sons of the gods who was put to death upon the cross for the benefit of the world of humanity, for there were nearly a score of these semi-deities, or sons of gods, who were said to have been crucified centuries before the name of Jesus was heard of on the earth.

We have seen, too, that the Trinity and the existence of the Holy Ghost did not originate among Christians, for the pagans had held to the same hundreds of years before the Christians appropriated these dogmas to make up their own creed.

These being absolute and positive truths—and if they are not we implore thee to now speak and let us know the fact, or to take some means, at a very early date, to let us and the world at large know the real truth—these being the facts, we say, are we not fully justified in continuing our examinations and inquiries to learn, if possible, what there is in the Christian religion that is original and peculiar to it, and

was not borrowed or pilfered from the old pagan systems?

Canst thou have any objection to our learning the full truth pertaining to these things? and canst thou feel the least unwillingness to have us give our attention to these subjects, and to obtain all the light that is to be had in this direction?

As, then, crucifixions and demi-gods were resorted to many centuries before Jesus is said to have been crucified, was not the *Cross*, as a symbol of holiness, used by different nations fully a thousand years before Christians adopted it?

Was not the cross used as a religious symbol by the ancient pagans of India, Persia, Thibet, Egypt, Arabia, Greece, and many other countries, ages before the dawn of Christianity?

Is there any religious symbol that has descended from the early faiths of the world more confirmed and more positively demonstrated than this symbol of the cross?

Did not several of the apostolic and Christian fathers admit in their writings the great use that had been made of the cross, previous to the existence of Christianity, in the various pagan religions of the world.

Did not Justin Martyr, born near the close of the first century, admit that the worshipers of Mithra, the Persian mediator, had the sign of the cross affixed to their foreheads as a badge of divinity, and this nearly a thousand years before Christians used the symbol?

In an apology addressed to Antoninus Pius, did not this early father say, "If, then we hold some opinions near akin to the poets and philosophers in most repute among you, why are we thus unjustly hated? For in saying that all things were made in this beautiful manner by God, what do we seem to say more than Plato? When we teach a general conflagration, what do we teach more than the Stoics? By opposing the work of men's hands we concur with Menander the comedian; and by declaring the Logos, the first begotten of God, to be born of a virgin, without any human mixture, to be crucified and dead, and to have risen again, and ascended into heaven, we say no more in this than what you say of those whom you style the Sons of Jove. For you need not be told what number of sons the writers most in

vogue among you assign to Jove. There is Mercury, Jove's interpreter, in imitation of the Logos, in worship among you. There is Æsculapius the physician, smitten by a thunderbolt, and after that ascending into heaven. There is Bacchus torn to pieces, and Hercules burned to get rid of his pains. There are Castor and Pollux, the sons of Jove by Leda and Perseus by Danæ, not to mention others. I fain would know why you always deify departed emperors, and have a fellow at hand to make affidavit that he saw Cæsar ascend into heaven from the funeral pile. As to the Son of God called Jesus, should we allow him to be no more than man, yet the title of 'Son of God' is very justifiable on account of his wisdom, considering you have your Mercury in worship under the title of 'the Word and Messenger of God.' As to the objection of our Jesus being crucified, I will say that suffering was common to all the aforementioned sons of Jove, but only they suffered another kind of death. As to his being born of a virgin, you have your Perseus to balance that; as to his curing the lame, the paralytic, and such as were cripple from their birth, this is little more than what is said for your Æsculapius"?

Did not Tertullian, born in the second century, admit, in an apology he wrote, the previous existence among the pagans of Christian doctrines, Christian rites and symbols, including the cross ?

Did not Melito, Bishop of Sardis in Lybia, in the second century, in an apology addressed to Marcus Antoninus, say : "The philosophy which we possess truly flourished aforetime, but having blossomed again in the great reign of Cæsar Augustus, thy ancestor, it proved to be, above all things, ominous of good for thy kingdom"?

Did not Origen, also born in the second century, admit the earlier use of the rites and symbols of the Church ?

Did not Minutius Felix, in his *Octavius*, written A. D. 211, write these words, "I must tell you that we neither adore the crosses, nor deride them; you it is, ye pagans, who are most likely to worship wooden crosses, as being parts of the same substance with your deities. For what else are your ensigns, flags, and standards? Your victories not only represent a simple cross but a cross with a man on it. Thus

you see that the sign of the cross has either some foundation in nature or in your own religion, and therefore ought not to be considered an objection against Christians?"?

Are here not direct Christian admissions in the very infancy of the Church that the sign of the cross had long before been used as a sacred symbol by the pagan nations?

Did not Shelton, in his *Appeal*, say: "How it came to pass that the Egyptians, Arabians, and Indians, before the time of Christ, paid such a remarkable veneration to the sign of the cross, is to me unknown; but the fact is known; and in Egypt it stood for the sign of eternal life"?

Did not Dr. Oliver (*Hist. of Init.*) say: "The Christian reader may start when he beholds the sacred emblem of his faith, and as a symbol of heathen devotion, but it is even so. . . . It is found engraven on their monuments, and the erection of their temples was conducted on the same cruciform principle. The two great pagodas of Benares and Matthura were erected in the form of vast crosses?

Did not a recent writer in the *Edinburgh Review* say thus: "From the dawn of organized paganism in the Eastern world to the final establishment of Christianity in the Western, the cross was undoubtedly one of the commonest and most sacred symbolical monuments; and to a remarkable extent is so still in almost every land where that of Calvary is unrecognized or unknown. It appears to have been the original possession of every people of antiquity"?

Did not the Christian writer, Georgius (Antoine Aguste), in his "Tibetinum Alphabetum," give plates of the god, Indra, nailed to a cross, with five wounds; which crosses are to be seen in Nepaul at the corners of roads and on eminences?

Do not, we repeat, the admissions of these and many other Christian writers abundantly prove that the cross was extensively used as a religious symbol by pagans ages before the believers in Christ adopted it?

Was not the cross used by the ancient Scandinavians and the Celtic Druids long anterior to the Christian religion?

When Cortez and Pizarro conquered Mexico and Peru, did they not find the cross engraved upon the walls and pillars of the temples, showing that on the Western continent as well as

on the Eastern, the symbol of the cross had been used from time immemorial ?

Cannot even the symbol of the cross be traced as far back into antiquity as the Phallic worship ? Was not the cross originally used to represent the god Phallus, the male organ of generation ? And is it not true that in the Phallic worship was the origin of many of the religions which subsequently ruled in the pagan and Christian world ?

Was not the symbol of the cross which thus originated in the sexual worship of the extreme ancients the representation of life, vigor, and regeneration, and in that view was not the symbol an object of worship and veneration for thousands of years ?

Do we not then, when we see the symbol of the cross which Christians view with such a feeling of deep veneration, have the best of reasons for regarding it as having a wholly pagan origin, and can we not see in it a relic of the superstitions and fallacies that have ruled in the world for thousands of years ?

Is it not far more truly a symbol of paganism and superstition than it is of light, truth, and progress ?

Does it not also argue a great want of originality and invention in the Christians for the past two thousand years to be thus under the necessity of taking up the cast-off garments and symbols of antique pagan religions, rather than to get up something new and original ?

Great Jehovah, with thy consent, let us continue our enquiries of thee relative to the faiths that men have maintained in past ages.

Is it not true that the creeds and dogmas of the world, for the last five thousand years, have been outgrowths, one from another, descending from one nation to another, precisely as the symbol of the cross was borrowed by many nations and many religions from the same general source ?

Was not the symbol of the cross equally as expressive and equally as sacred when used by the ancient fetish worshipers, by the ancient Phallic worshipers, by the ancient Hindoos, Thibetians, Arabians, and Egyptians, in memory of their incarnated gods, as when borrowed from them and used in a similar way by the Christians ?

In the same manner was not the supposed birth-day of thy son, called the "Christmas Festival," which occurs on the 25th of December, taken, out-and-out from pagan observances and traditions?

Has not the 25th of December been observed as a festival more than twice as long as Christianity has had an existence?

Was it not thousands of years ago piously commemorated in India, Chaldea, and Egypt? Was not its observance attended with pomp, hilarity and rejoicing?

Did not the ancient Druids also keep the same festival, and did they not at that time decorate their places of worship and their dwellings with the boughs of holly, mistletoe, fir, and other evergreens?

Did not this festival of December 25th originate with the star-worshipers of Chaldea as being the day when the sun of this solar system had its birth and began to rise from the long night of darkness, cold and death in which for months it had been buried?

Does not the sun, in fact on that day begin to rise in the heavens and to throw his life-giving and beneficent rays more directly upon the earth which receives from this source its light and heat and life?

Is it not easy to see that from this astronomical fact of the sun commencing to rise, or in other words, to be born, on the 25th day of December, has been the origin of all the birth-of-the-Son-of-God ideas with which the world has been filled? Was not the original conception purely of an astronomical character?

Has not the sun worship really been the parent of the numerous systems of religions and creeds that have prevailed over the earth? And as those ideas have spread in various directions, influenced by the ignorance and superstition which mankind have been cursed with, have not most crude and monstrous notions often been indulged in and have not most repulsive enormities been connected with those creeds?

Is it not true, too, that there is a decided discrepancy as to the time when Jesus was born, and is not the most certain fact we have in the case, that he was not born on the 25th of December?

Do not Christian authorities disagree widely as to the year and as to the time of the year in which Jesus was born? Is there not a difference of seven years as to the year, and of as many months as to the time in the year?

Did not the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol incline to the opinion that he was born in February, while Dr. Robinson contended that it took place in Autumn? Did not Dr. Lardner give it as his opinion that Jesus was born from August to November, while Weisler, the German chronologer, and Tischendorf adhered to February or one of the Spring months?

Are not the probabilities about as strong that he was not born at all as any other way? Are not the accounts of his conception, of his childhood, youth, and even his whole life so vague—as given by those writers called Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—and so utterly unsupported by any corroborative history or biography, while partaking so much of the myths and legends that are known to have existed in the world hundreds of years earlier, that it is a very fair conclusion to come to that the entire story of his life and adventures is wholly mythical?

Is not this more especially the case when the real apochryphal character of those gospels is understood and the facts are known that there is not the slightest proof that those narratives were in existence, as they are now known, until at least one hundred and fifty to two hundred years of the Christian era had passed away?

Was not Immortality of the Soul a doctrine that was taught and firmly believed in by the pagans long before the Christian religion was established? Was it not distinctly taught by the Indian and Persian Magi, reformers, leaders and redeemers?

Was not the soul's immortality taught by Thales, Pythagoras, Plato and numerous others of the ancient sages and philosophers?

Has Christianity any just right to claim the paternity of the doctrine of immortality?

Was not Baptism a religious ceremony that was practiced in heathen countries long before Christianity adopted it? Did not the ancient Hindoos have great faith in the efficacy

of water in cleansing the soul from sin, and did they not have their periodical ablutions?

Was it not thought that the river Ganges, like the Jordan, was more holy than the water from other rivers, and that it was more efficacious in removing the stains of sin?

Was it not also believed that once in twelve years the waters of Lake Cumbachum were possessed of special power to wash away the effects of sin, and were they not resorted to with great religious confidence and earnestness?

Was it not also a regular ceremony with the Brahmins to sprinkle the infants with the holy water of the Ganges on the ninth day after birth? When a person was dying, did not the Brahmins hastily plunge into a river under the belief that by the action of water the soul of the dying man would be cleansed from the effects of sin?

Did not all the Asiatic nations attach great sacredness to water, and did they not all at stated periods practice ablutions as important ceremonies in their religions?

Was not the rite of Baptism and the veneration for holy water clearly borrowed by the Christians from the systems of religion that had an earlier existence?

In like manner was not the Eucharist—the Lord's supper—an old rite among the pagans? Was not the ceremony of the feast of the Lord's supper long kept up in the city of Eleusis and other parts of Greece in honor of the God, Bacchus, or the Sun, and called also the Son of God, and this long prior to Christianity?

Was it not held by the Greeks that the goddess Ceres gave her body to be eaten by her worshipers? Did not Bacchus in like manner give his body and his blood?

Was not the belief common also in the ancient Asiatic nations that holy bread had a direct influence in propitiating the anger of their gods, and was not the eating of holy bread often resorted to?

Did not the ancient Brahmins have a kind of Eucharist called "prajadom," and does not the writer, Alnitonae, give an account of it?

Was it not also a custom among the ancient Peruvians when they had sacrificed a lamb to their gods, to blend the

blood with flour and distribute the cakes or wafers thus made among the worshipers to partake of?

Did not Cicero, forty years before the birth of Jesus, in writing against the absurd rite of the Lord's supper, put this question: "How can a man be so stupid as to imagine that which he eats to be a god?" Could not the same question be as appropriately asked at the present time?

Is it not fully clear that the rite of the Lord's supper is another of the Christian sacraments borrowed from Pagans? And is it not an additional proof of the dearth of Christian invention in getting up ceremonies new and original, in place of borrowing the antiquated and absurd notions of the older systems?

Great Jehovah, in addition to the other rites and dogmas borrowed by the Christians from Pagans, was not the idea of a personal Devil also borrowed?

Did not the ancient Hebrews, including Moses, have a very imperfect conception of thy great antagonist?

Is it not true that the name Devil is not mentioned once in the Old Testament; and that Satan, a name supposed to apply to the same individual, is mentioned but five times?

Did not the Jewish system of theology recognize in a slight degree only, the existence of a personal Devil, while all the Pagan systems of religion had Devils in great abundance?

In the Hindoo system of theology or mythology was not their Siva, the Destroyer, one in their grand trinity? Did they not also have a legion of Evil Spirits called Rakshasas, at the head of which was the grand chief, Ravana?

Did they not also believe in hosts of other wicked spirits which they called Sooras and Asooras, which they believed to be step-brothers in perpetual hostility?

Did not the ancient Persians in their system have a grand Devil whom they called Ahriman, and who was brother to their chief god Ormuzd?

Did they not also have their evil spirits called Devs and Arch-Devs, as well as a lower class of evil spirits called Fervors, all of which opposed and counteracted the influence of the good spirits, or angels, called Izeds?

Did not the Egyptians have their great Devil, named Typho, and was he not also brother of their grand deity, Osiris? Were there not numerous subordinates under this chief devil of the Egyptians?

Did not the Grecians and Romans also have their evil deities or devils like Pluto, who reigned in a dismal, subterranean, sulphurous region, and Typhon, the father of Cerberus, a monster of a dog with three heads, whose body was covered in a terrible manner with snakes in place of hair, and who was the porter or door-keeper of hell?

Did not, in fact, every ancient system of religion that existed on the earth before the dawn of Christianity have its devils and evil spirits, and is it not fair to conclude that Christians borrowed their devilish ideas from those sources?

In like manner did they not obtain from the Pagans the gloomy idea of hell—a dark, dismal, subterraneous place of horrors, where unfortunate wretches who once lived on the earth were said to be confined for an indefinite period of time?

Was not the Jewish idea of hell—*Sheol, Hades, or Gehenna*—a limited one, and confined wholly to this world?

Did not the word in Hebrew apply only to the valley of Hinon outside of Jerusalem, a ravine or gulf, where carcasses were thrown to get them out of the way, where maggots and worms were gendered in great numbers, and where fires were kept up to consume the rubbish and bodies of animals thrown into the foul place?

Had the Hebrews any other hell in their system of belief than this valley of Hinnon or Gehenna? Did they have any definite idea of a future life either in a state of happiness or misery?

Did not their entire theology, their moral teachings, their ideas of rewards and punishments relate solely to this earthly life?

* Didst thou ever give them, through the patriarchs, the divine lawgiver Moses, or any of the prophets, any definite idea of a future existence, either in a state of happiness or in a state of wretchedness?

Is it not, then perfectly clear that Christians are indebted

to the Pagans almost entirely for their ideas of a devil and a hell ?

Did they not make a serious mistake in adopting these gloomy monstrosities into their system of religion instead of preserving the indefinite Hebrew conception of these enormities which was said to have been handed down from thyself ?

Is it not, in fact, a little singular, if there is any truth in the crude notions of a Christian devil and a Christian hell, that thou didst never inform thy people at all upon the subject ?

Can it be that thou didst deem instruction to thy people how to cut their garments, how they should trim their beards, and numerous things of that kind, of more importance than information about a personal devil and place of torment awaiting them in the future life and how best they could escape them ?

Is it not rather a truth that this idea of an eternal antagonist to thyself who is to spend an eternity in punishing thy unfortunate creatures who have offended thee, in a burning lake of sulphur, is one that was not taken from thy ancient teachings, but was borrowed from the heathens of the Pagan world ?

In like manner, did not the Christians borrow from Pagans many others of their doctrines, creeds and ceremonies ? Did they not get from Pagandom a belief in a final "day of judgment" as well as of future rewards and punishments ?

Did they not get from Pagans their belief in the "resurrection of the body" ?

Did they not get from the same source their belief in "angels and spirits" ? Did not the Pagans believe in those thousands of years ago ?

Were not "fasting and prayer" Pagan rites that were observed long before there were Christians to fast and pray ?

Had not "monks" and "monasteries" an existence in Thibet and other Asiatic countries nearly a thousand years before Christians adopted the idea ?

Was not the "second birth" taught by Pagans hundreds of years before it was by Christians ?

Are not "confession of sins" and "absolution" Pagan rites much older than Christianity?

"Was not "The efficacy of prayer" taught, and were not millions of prayers offered up thousands of years before a Christian ever uttered a prayer?

Did not Pagan nations have their "priesthood" which ministered to them, which declared to them the will of the gods, which proclaimed the demands of heaven, and enjoined the most abject obedience on the masses, long, long before Christianity was thought of on the earth?

Is not, then, the Christian priesthood wholly an adaptation of Pagan usages which have been rife in the world since the early ages of crude fetishism?

Is there really any more good sense in Christians supporting a privileged class—which assumes to know more about God, the invisible world, and future existence than other people do, though it really does not—than there was for the fetish-worshipers, the sun-worshipers, or those who bowed down to snakes, crocodiles, and images of stone, wood, and metal?

Did not all the old Pagan nations have their "bibles" or "sacred writings," which were claimed to have been delivered from their gods, and which contained hidden mysteries of a most important character touching the past, present, and future which man had no other means of learning, and this hundreds of years before Christians revered the Jewish Scriptures?

Were not "repentance" and "humility" taught as moral virtues thousands of years before a Christian lived to teach them?

Were not the moral principles, the moral injunctions, the lessons prescribing good conduct, and directing the proper intercourse between man and man, as fully taught and as strictly enjoined by the old sages and philosophers who lived centuries before Christianity was born, as was done by Jesus, his apostles, and by the early Fathers of the Church?

Jehovah, may we ask thee, then, if all these dogmas, all these symbols, all these rites, all these moral teachings, existed in the world hundreds, and some of them thousands, of years before the origin of the Christian religion, is it not

fraudulent and false in Christianity to claim that it was the first to introduce them into the world ?

Did Christianity invent or originate a single moral virtue, a single humane quality, a single good sentiment that now exists among mankind ?

Have not all these existed in a more or less perfect degree as long as man has existed on the earth? Are they not inherent in the nature and organization of the constitution of man ?

Has man really ever received a single divine attribute, moral quality, or noble incentive from any of the gods or any of the priests who profess to minister for them ?

Instead of looking to gods, visible or invisible, or harkening to priests who pretend that they are commissioned to act for the gods, is it not far better for man to fully know himself, to develop his own nature, and to perfect it in the good qualities of which it is so grandly capable?

If, then, there are none of these "dogmas," "rites," "ceremonies," "sacraments," "points of creed," or "matters of belief," of which Christianity is composed which it really invented or originated, is there nothing which it can be credited as being the parent or originator of ?

Can not she have the credit of introducing more extensively than was ever done before *religious wars, persecutions, and bloodshed* ?

Has Christianity not been the cause of more sanguinary wars, more massacres, more slaughters, more inhuman persecutions, and far more agonizing and horrible deaths, than all the other religious systems combined which have been known before or since it came into existence ?

In the bloody series of wars alone, called the "Crusades," which continued over a term of fifty years, which were instituted by Christians to crush the Mohammedans and to rescue the "Holy City" and the "Sepulchres of the Saints" from the control of the "unbelieving Saracens," is it not estimated that the blood of sixty millions of human beings was made to saturate the earth ?

Was not the happiness of hundreds of thousands of families totally ruined and the utmost suffering and devastation spread over many lands ?

Did not the Church for nearly five hundred years, with that worse than diabolical institution called the "Holy Inquisition," drag thousands and tens of thousands of hapless and helpless men and women from their homes—from their firesides, and from their beds, even—at all hours of the day and night, and, in the fastnesses of the most cruel prisons and dungeons, subject them to the indescribable tortures of the rack, the wheel, the pulleys, the thumb-screw, the chafing-dish, and numerous other infernal inventions, slowly but surely and most cruelly crushing the last throb of life from the wretched objects of torture ?

Were not these enormities time and again committed without the unfortunate creatures ever being apprised of the offense with which they were charged or knowing who were their accusers ?

Were not these arrests made in most cases because the victims to sectarian intolerance dared to think for themselves and had the temerity to question the authority of the magnates of the Church or the truth of some of the dogmas which it enjoined ?

Were not thousands and thousands of poor wretches burned at the stake by slow fires and rapid fires, at the command of religious despots, and all in the interests of Christianity ?

Was it not in the interest of Christianity that the Moors of Spain, the Waldenses and the Albigenses of France and Italy were so mercilessly persecuted and driven from their homes and put to the most ignominious deaths ?

Was it not at the instigation of the Christian Church that that incarnate fiend of the Church, Alva, desolated the Netherlands in the sixteenth century, and who caused the death of some forty thousand innocent men and women ?

Was it not the followers and adherents of the Christian system that instigated and executed the notorious massacre in Paris on St. Bartholomew's day in 1572, when fully forty thousand inoffensive men, women, and children were foully murdered ?

Has not the same sanguinary system moved uncounted numbers of tyrants, persecutors, and oppressors, in various countries and at various times, to place the heel of oppres-

sion upon the necks of the suffering people who have thus been deprived of their civil rights and of their lives ?

In the relentless rule here briefly alluded to, with much that must be passed over unmentioned, has not Christianity proved itself a most cruel tyrant, and a system more suppressive of human rights and human happiness than any other form of religion or kind of government that has ever existed in the world ?

Hast thou not, Jehovah, in thousands of instances, had good cause to be heartily ashamed of the base conduct of those who claimed to be followers of thy son, and could thou not easily see that they committed far more enormities than did the adherents of all the Pagan systems to which we have alluded ?

And hast thou not, during all the centuries in which these fiendish outrages have been committed in thy name and in the name of thy son, sat placidly and serenely on thy throne in heaven and viewed all this reign of carnage and blood, while millions of the helpless creatures were being most inhumanly put to death by the most aggravated tortures of which the human mind was capable of conceiving; .hast thou not complacently and smilingly beheld all this without once lifting a hand or a finger to check the horrible wrongs or to stay the flow of blood ?

Are we not left to conclude that as all things that transpire on this globe take place by thy will and approbation only thou didst not object to the shedding of blood and the slaying of men, women, and children without number which we have alluded to, and that thou caredst so little about it that thou didst not deem it worth thy while to make the slightest effort to arrest it ?

Is it strange, in view of all this, that thousands of persons should come to the conclusion that there is no all-powerful Father and Friend residing in a heavenly mansion above the skies who benignantly looks down from his celestial abode with love and pity in his eyes for the sufferings his creatures are compelled to endure, who stretches forth his arm and uses his exhaustless power to avert danger and harm from those designing villains who, in his name, exer-

cise all their ability and all their cunning to oppress and afflict their helpless victims ?

Do not those who depend upon themselves and upon the light of science and truth to enlighten them and who do not still remain in the confines of mysticism, darkness, and superstition and do not look for any god to aid and succor them, get along quite as well as those who believe in one great, omnipotent God, or who accept a multitude of them ? Do not those who discard mythical, unfeeling, and unsympathetic gods and all the systems of religion which have been based on the ignorance and credulity of man, take decidedly the most sensible course ?

Great Jehovah, let us leave for a time the consideration of such disagreeable subjects as Christian persecutions, Christian wars and Christian bloodshed in the later centuries, and return to thy own ways and requirements of thy people in olden times. Let us enquire of thee of the observances and duties which thou didst demand of them in the times when thou wast daily with them and heldst direct intercourse with them.

We would ask of thee in reference to the *Sacrifices* which thou didst demand in former times of the people whom thou didst choose in preference to all the other nations of the earth.

Were not *Offerings* and *Sacrifices* of animals of various kinds demanded by thee? and did they not afford thee great pleasure and often restore thee to good humor when thy feelings, from various causes, had been ruffled, and when thy wrath had been kindled to a high degree of heat and excitement?

Are we not led to conclude that the smell of the burning flesh, blood, bones, kidneys, cauls, fat, entrails, hair, hoofs, feathers, etc., of bulls, rams, he-goats, and birds of various kinds was most agreeable to thy olfactories, and produced a very pleasant and soothing sensation upon thy feelings?

Was not the construction of *Altars* upon which to burn and roast the carcasses of animals, and the instructions with reference to the manufacture of the *pans*, *ovens*, *frying-pans*, *shovels*, *flesh-hooks*, *basins*, etc., subjects which claimed thy

special attention, and didst thou not make thy will known as to how they should be made and used?

Didst thou not give explicit directions how the priests should be dressed and decorated while attending to the slaying and burning of the bulls, the rams and goats? Didst thou not say: "These are the garments which they shall make: a *breastplate*, an *ephod*, a *robe*, a *bordered coat*, a *mitre*, and a *girdle*. They are to be made of *gold* and *blue*, and *purple* and *scarlet* and *fine linen*"?

Did it not always make thee feel gracious and beneficent when the fumes of those burning substances arose to thy nos'rils?

Was not thy nose gotten up upon a somewhat different plan from what the best arranged noses are now-a-days, to be pleased with such villainous smells?

Did those fumes fill the office of food to thee, or were they simply a source of pleasure and gratification?

Didst thou not demand the best of the flocks and the herds for thy own use, claiming, in all cases, those without blemish or disease?

Wert thou not partial to the male sex in the choice thou madest of the animals to be sacrificed unto thyself? Was this because the bulls, the rams, and the he-goats had a more pleasant smell in thy nostrils than had cows, ewes, or she-goats?

Did it not give the place of worship about thy altars, where thy people so often congregated, and where the blood of animals was daily spilt, much the appearance of a slaughter-house? and did not the decomposing flesh and blood of the animals, especially in warm weather, send up a most offensive odor? Or was that also a sweet savor in thy nostrils?

In fact, was not the system which required such a constant slaughtering and burning of beasts rather a *beastly* sort of religion?

Did it not give Aaron and his sons, and after them the Levites and priests, much the appearance of butchers to be smeared with blood from head to foot; to apply the blood of bullocks, rams, etc., to their thumb-nails and toe-nails and to be sprinkled over their persons?

In instances where the hair, the intestines, and the dung of the animals offered unto thee were separated from the meat and burned without the camp, did not the offensive odors arising from the same reach thy nostrils just as much as though burnt upon the altar? Is not thy nose about as much in one place as in another? Would not the bad smells of burning hair, hide, horns, and dung, reach thy organs of smell just as soon when burned without the camp as within?

Was it a real fact that thou didst truly delight in the smell arising from burning and frying meat, fat, and blood, or didst thou simply submit to it because of the good effect thou deemedst it would have upon thy people to engage in that bloody exercise?

Didst thou not have a far greater partiality for the fumes of burning animals than for vegetables? and was it not for this cause that thou wert more pleased with the offering of animals made unto thee by Abel than thou wert with the fruits of the earth presented to thee by Cain?

Is it not a truth in history and dietetics that people who live largely upon the flesh of animals, and who spill a great amount of blood, are more ferocious and savage in their dispositions than those who live mainly upon grains, seeds, fruits and roots?

Do not men and women, in a great degree, exhibit characteristics agreeing with the nature of the food they eat? Is it not the same with animals? Are they not mild or ferocious partly according to the nature of their food?

If, twenty-five hundred or three thousand years ago, thou tookest great pleasure in the smell of burning bulls and rams and he-goats, are we not correct in inferring that thy taste has changed somewhat, and that thou now carest much less for fresh meat, blood, fat, entrails, etc., than formerly?

If this is so, does it not prove that gods are subject to the same law of evolution that other beings are, and that they change in taste, appetites and desires as really as other people do?

If it was commendable in thy people to offer up burnt offerings of roasting animals three thousand years ago, is it not equally so at the present time? If it pleased thee then

should it not please thee now? Does not the Book say repeatedly that thou art unchangeable?

To what, then, can we attribute this change in the programme of worship and oblation to thee? Is it because it was found that the practice of slaughtering animals and spilling so much the blood of bulls and rams made a very filthy place around the altar and in the temple? or was it because thou changedst thy mind and concludedst that the service of the heart, and the actions of a good life were far preferable to blood of bullocks and goats? Or again, was it because the Israelites gradually advanced from a state of barbarism and no longer took pleasure in slaying and roasting animals as a religious rite?

Was it not a crude and savage idea of deity—of the Creator and Ruler of the vast Universe—to think that his highest pleasure consisted in smelling the fumes of burning and frying animals? And was not the idea borrowed from the primitive savage races who lived prior to civilization in the world, and who sacrificed the results of the chase to placate their exacting and malicious gods?

Is not the belief in local and tutelar deities, of tribal or household gods, by the offering of animals and other presents, with the view of appeasing their anger and securing their good will, far older in the world than the existence of the Jewish nation?

Does not the business of animal sacrifice, including the frying and burning of flesh, fat, and bones, more rightfully belong to the crude, barbarous age of the world than to the days of education and mental refinement?

Is not a God who can take pleasure in the smell of burning animal tissues far inferior to and more crude than one who takes pleasure in intellectual advancement and in a highly cultured condition of the human race? Does not the killing and burning of dumb beasts as a religious sacrament belong to the same phase of civilization as do religious wars and pious massacres?

Is such business fitted to any c'ass of human beings, save those who are on the plane of ignorance and crudity?

Can it be that the shedding of blood of any animal, with the frying of its flesh and blood in addition, can do away

with the effects of any wrong act which a man or woman may commit?

Is there any way in the world whereby a wrong act can be remedied so effectually as to discontinue the wrong conduct committed?

Is not the entire idea of one beast, or one person, *atoning* for the sins and misdeeds of another, the possibility of one person taking the guilt of another, a most fallacious one?

Is not the belief in it calculated to work a great mischief in the world? If a person believes that if he commits an absolute wrong the guilt can be transferred to another and that the good deeds, or the life of another, can be imputed to him as righteousness and virtue, is it not calculated to make him indifferent as to what his conduct is?

If a person is taught to believe that he can evade the responsibility of his acts, or that he can escape the consequences of a vicious course of life, that the debt so incurred may be paid by another, is it not directly designed to make him careless and reckless as to what wrong action he is guilty of?

Is it not better that every intelligent being be taught that there is absolutely no forgiveness, no atonement, for any moral offense, or any wicked deed that he commits, and that he cannot by any possibility escape the legitimate effects of bad conduct; that if he violates the laws of health, of chastity, or any of the laws of Nature, whether physical or moral, that he is bound to bring the consequence upon his own head, which no animal and no being can remove or take away?

Is not the old Hebrew idea of the *scape-goat* which was periodically laden with the sins of the people and sent adrift into the wilderness, by which process the people were supposed to be freed from the evil deeds they had committed, a most senseless absurdity?

Is it possible for a goat or a sheep or a lamb, whether dead or alive, to remove a particle of guilt or crime from the body or the soul of a single living person?

Was the sacrifice of animals and of human beings also a part of thy original scheme of shedding blood and burning

flesh for thy pleasure and benefit, or was it for the good of a portion of the human race ?

Was it not in keeping with this business of human sacrifice that thou commandedst Abraham to offer up his little son, Isaac ?

Was it not in keeping with this sanguinary rite that Jephthah sacrificed his only daughter unto thee?

Is not human sacrifice recognized in thy Word where it says: " No devoted thing which a man shall devote unto the Lord of all that he hath, both of man and beast and of the field, in his possession, shall be sold or redeemed. Every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord. None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed, but shall surely be put to death "? (Lev., xxvii, 27, 28).

Was it not in keeping with this old idea of human sacrifice unto thee that the wars of extermination and the numerous sanguinary slaughters were conducted and perpetrated in thy name ?

Was not animal sacrifice, as well as the offerings of fruit, and vegetables and a numerous list of edibles, thousands of years ago, a part of the religious rites of fetish worshipers and pagans in a large portion of the nations of antiquity ?

Were not baked meats, bread, wine, and a variety of dishes taken in to the gods and presented as a propitiation or as a means to secure their favor and good will?

Did not the wily priests derive a great benefit from this system of sacrificing to the gods? Did not they and their families thus come in possession of the rich viands which their dupes prepared for the gods to partake of?

In a similar way did not the Jewish priests derive a direct benefit from the great number of animals that were ostensibly put to death for thy benefit ?

When *Wave-Offerings*, *Heave Offerings*, *Free-will-Offerings*, *Trespass-Offerings*, and the other kinds of offerings made of fine flour, turtle doves, pigeons, etc., given with a view of producing a magical effect upon thy mind and feelings, did not the greater portion of it fall into the possession of the priests?

In fact, has not this been the result of nearly all the rites, sacrifices, and offerings that have been required of man for

thy benefit—have not all finally inured to the benefit of the priests? Have they not made their living for thousands of years by claiming to minister to thee for the people below them and to stand as mediator between thyself and themselves?

Has not the trade of communing with thee in behalf of the masses, and with them in behalf of thee, long been a profitable occupation for almost countless thousands of priests? and has it not afforded them a lazy and respectable way of making an easy living, while the great bulk of toilers have been compelled to support them, a privileged class of idle drones?

Did not the great and mistaken system of sacrificing, of making atonement of one for another, whether the victim was an animal or a man, did it not culminate in the sacrificing thy own beloved Son to appease thy own anger, and to bear away the guilt of a sinful world?

Was not thy Son the embodiment of all the bulls, all the rams, all the he-goats, all the pigeons, all the turtle doves, and all the other sacrifices that have been slain and offered up for the last five thousand years?

Is not the sacrificing of an innocent, affectionate, devoted and faultless child for the offenses of others, the most revolting specimen of "divine justice" of which man is capable of conceiving? *

Without wishing to be personal or invidious, may we not suggest that a parent who could lay a plan by which the cruel death of his own fond and inoffensive offspring should be a necessity to produce a forgiving state of his own mind and to make it possible for him to look with leniency upon the failings and errors of billions of his other creatures, must possess most monstrous characteristics, and is a being whom a just person can neither love nor respect?

May we enquire if the sacrifice of thy own Son produced the same or similar results upon thy mind or feelings as did the fumes of burning animals and birds?

Is not the sacrifice of a dear and only child on the altar of vindictive but mistaken justice more repulsive to the finer feelings of man and woman than the slaying and roasting of

all the bulls, rams, and he-goats, from the earliest time to the present ?

Was not the practice of slaying and burning animals, which thou requireddest of thy people, more crude and beastly than was required by the gods of any other nations?

In the same way was not the taking the life of thine own son for the sins committed by others the most severe case of unnatural and vindictive *justice* that has ever been known in the world?

Is there any other god in the thousands that men in various countries have bowed to, who has committed an act at all comparable with that, in point of hard-heartedness, relentlessness, and severity?

Hast thou not in this respect far transcended all the other gods of barbarism, paganism, and superstition?

Is not, then, the Christian religion, founded upon the sacrifice—the offering up of the blood and life of a lovely, angelic son to the same God who once delighted in the smell of burning bulls, rams, and he-goats—more revolting to the finer sensibilities of human nature than any other system of religion the world has known ?

Great Jehovah, we would ask of thee relative to another rite, which thou didst institute in olden times, and to which thou seemedst for a time to attach great importance—the rite of *circumcision*.

Did the cutting off of a small portion of the persons of the males among thy people—the prepuce--change them in any essential manner, either physically or morally? Did it make the impure more pure, or did it impart integrity to the dishonest?

If thou didst prefer thy people to be in the condition of the circumcised, if they were thus more acceptable unto thee, may we ask why thou didst not create them originally in that condition? Why didst thou form them with a redundant portion of the body which gave thee offense, or which thou wishedst to have removed ?

Did a little piece of skin, more or less, make any special

difference with them or thee? Was there really anything vile or offensive in the small part cut off? If so, would it not have been better not to have created it in the first place? If it was insisted on as a "covenant" between thee and thy people that though mightest better know them, or that they might appear more acceptable in thy sight, didst thou take pleasure when the ceremony was performed? Was it especially pleasing unto thee when the rite was afterwards performed upon the babies eight days old?

Was it because the law or requirement of thine to circumcise all the males among thy people was of more importance than thy other laws and requirements, known as the "Ten Commandments," and all the other rites and ceremonies which thou didst institute by thy servant Moses, five hundred years later, that this was revealed so long before the others?

Are we not to understand that, as thou gavest this law to Abraham five centuries earlier than thou gavest thy other laws, this was more vital and of more consequence? May we enquire why at the same time thou didst not institute thy other laws, which at a later date thou didst introduce with much pomp and demonstration?

If circumcision was of so much more consequence than the other rites and ceremonies that thou deemedst it necessary to enjoin it five hundred years before the others, is it not a little singular that thy favorite and chosen lawgiver, Moses, should have attached no more consequence to it?

Is it not a little noticeable, too, that, under the administration of thy great leader and lawgiver, Moses, very little or nothing was said about circumcision?

How is it that thou allowedest the ceremony to so fall into disuse that scarcely anything of it was done during the forty years thy people were making that journey of a few hundred miles?

Why was it, when thou wast in almost daily intercourse with Moses, that thou didst not allude to the subject, did not command its revival, and that it was left for Joshua to bring into use again after Moses had passed away?

If the rite of circumcision was really vital to the welfare

of thy people, or to thy own peace of mind towards them, why didst thou not enjoin it in the time of Moses, and why did not thy own son Jesus also commend it the time he was upon earth to make known thy entire will?

Does it not look to an outsider that in the first place thou feltst particularly urgent about it and afterwards became less so, and that thou finally relapsed into indifference upon the subject?

If thou now regardest the importance of the rite in the same light thou didst five thousand years ago would thou not wish thy people of the Christian persuasions to practice it?

Is not the fact that thou dost not now enjoin the performance of this rite another proof that gods, even, are subject to the great law of *change* that governs the Universe and everything it contains?

Upon this principle may we not expect that still greater changes may take place in regard to what is ascribed to thy will and requirements? In one or two thousand years from now, if men still believe in thee, will not their notions of thy requirements and demands be likely to be greatly modified from what they are now?

Will not rites and ceremonies which are crude and physical in their nature be esteemed of far less importance in the eyes of men than they were a few thousand years ago? Will not the mental qualities, the improvement of the mind, the cultivation of the intellect, be the studies that will engross the attention of coming time far more than when mankind was in its infancy.

Is it not true that circumcision has been practiced by many pagan nations in various parts of the world? Was it not long practiced by the Colchians, the Egyptians, the Ethiopians, and Phœnicians? Was not, in fact, the observance of this rite wide-spread among the nations of Africa, as well as in Asia?

Is it not practiced in several of the savage nations and tribes of Africa even at the present day? As it is found the rite has been observed in the world for thousands of years, does it not seem more probable that the Jews borrowed it from the Egyptians and the neighboring nations rather than that the Egyptians should have borrowed it from a na-

tion whom they despised and almost abhorred—thy own specially chosen people?

Is there anything about the ceremony so esthetical or elevating that any nationality should wrangle for the honor of originating it?

If it was so important that mere children should have this ceremony performed upon them, and if they were thus in the slightest degree made more happy or more eligible to heaven, should not something of the kind have been gotten up for the female children also? Should they not have been allowed to participate in the benefits conferred by this ceremony?

Do not several of the pagan nations of the world practice among the females a ceremony somewhat akin to circumcision in the males?

Ought not the origin of a rite for the present or future happiness of females to be considered just as divine and heavenly as those expressly for the benefit of males?

Have not many similar rites and ceremonies, more or less sacred, been adopted by many of the nations of men who have lived upon the earth?

Were there not rites at festivals, (of which there were many), rites at birth, rites at puberty, rites at marriages, and rites at death?

Were not the rites performed at puberty, especially with the males, as practiced by some of the pagan nations, of a most severe, cruel and painful character?

Have not these been observed with a religious veneration as deep and as earnest as was the rite of circumcision, as performed by the Jews?

Were they not all just about as divine in their origin as the rite of circumcision, which we now have under consideration?

Were not all these crude ceremonies mere outgrowths of man in a semi-barbarous state, environed by ignorance and superstition, and with little correct appreciation of what is best calculated for the true adornment and happiness of the human race?

As men become more and more advanced in truth and knowledge, and occupy the plane of intellectuality, will they

not have less and less use for the crude rites and ceremonies of the Paganism and Fetishism of olden times?

Great Jehovah, let us, for the present, turn from the consideration of rites, ceremonies, sacraments, and sacrifices, and contemplate, for a time, thy own *Revealed Word*. We are told that the book called the Bible was written by thee, or that the individuals who penned it wrote by thy dictation.

If, then, thou didst perform the job, or if thou didst direct it and it was accomplished according to thy dictation, as thou art a perfect being, as in thee there is no falsehood nor inconsistency, shall we not find the *Word* which emanated from thee perfect in every particular?

May we ask thee whether thou didst absolutely write the book thyself or whether thou employedst the several writers who penned it to do it for thee?

If the several writers at different times wrote the parts of which the Bible is composed, didst thou move their hands as a man would operate a machine, or didst thou put the matter thou wishedst them to communicate into their minds and leave them to express the same in language of their own choosing?

If the latter was the mode in which thou didst the business, was there not great danger that sometimes the impression would be so weak that they would be under the necessity of supplying the defects from their own brains and minds, and that they would be at a loss to know whether it was thou or themselves who did the talking?

If thou didst intend the Bible for a revelation, was it not a revelation only to those to whom thou gavest the impression? Is it a revelation to those who take it upon trust at second-hand from the unknown parties who wrote it?

Is there any inherent proof that the Bible was written by thy hands or by thy dictation? Is there anything in it beyond the capacity of a tolerably smart man? Have not thousands of men lived in the past capable of writing such a book?

Have not great numbers of books been written by man in the world containing quite as great an amount of ability, truth, and accuracy?

' Is it claimed in one of the sixty-five books composing the Bible that the writers were acting for thee, or that thou didst dictate it to them ?

If it is nowhere so stated in the whole book, have we sufficient grounds for believing that the Bible was written or dictated by thee ?

In the absence, then, of any such assertion, even, who has the right to command us that we must accept it as thy word on pain of suffering the tortures of hell forever ?

If it was stated in each part and by each writer that the work was directly from thy hand or from thy brain, would that make it so, and would we be compelled to believe it ?

Hadst thou written the book, or employed others to write it for thee, wouldest thou not have done as much as to state the fact so that the world might have some way of knowing it ?

Is not the very fact that nowhere in the entire volume is it claimed that the book is from thee almost proof positive that the writers themselves did not think it was from thee, and that the claim that it *was* was altogether an afterthought, long subsequent to the times when it was written ?

Was not this claim of divine origin first made by an interested priesthood, and wholly without authority from thee ?

Is not a large portion of the book made up of the accounts of the worldly experiences of the nation of Jews, their adventures, their journeys, their contentions, their wars, their marryings, their illicit and adulterous connections, and much of that kind of detail which thou wouldest be very unlikely to spend thy time in writing or dictating to others, and which any fourth-rate scribe or clerk would be fully competent to write if the events had actually occurred, and which a third-rate scribe or priest could invent if the incidents never did take place as narrated ?

Dost thou not, as the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, have vastly too much to attend to, to spend thy time in writing down, or dictating for others to write down, all the trivial affairs of any nation, as when an old patriarch had connection with his wife, whether she conceived or not, and whether the result was a boy or a girl ?

Hadst thou the leisure and the disposition to record the

conduct of all the patriarchs and kings, how they went out to slay others of thy offspring and to state how many were made to bite the dust?

Didst thou find it convenient to make entries of the success thy people had in cattle-raising and in accumulating worldly property, and how many wives they severally had?

Even if thou tookest pleasure in that kind of literature, and even if it possessed some value in the age of the world in which it was written, is it of the slightest importance to us in this age, and cannot we find a greater amount of historical and scientific matter, immensely more valuable to us than those old legends and big stories?

Is it not quite probable that if thou hadst sat out to write a big book to present to the world that thy name and glory might be perpetuated among mankind, wouldest thou not have been likely to have had it contain matters that would have been of some practical value to the inhabitants of the earth—some scientific truths and discoveries that the world had before no knowledge of ?

Couldst thou have done better, inasmuch as thou didst wish to be the author of a large book and to make a present of it to mankind, than to have filled it with useful facts and discoveries which men have been compelled since to find out by tedious study and diligent research ?

Is it not a suspicious feature in the book that it was written greatly in the interest of a particular class—the priesthood—to the utter neglect of all scientific and practical truths ?

Did not the writers of the book often exhibit the utmost ignorance of the simplest matters of fact now perfectly understood by little school-boys and girls ten years of age ?

Did one of the writers of the Bible have the least knowledge of the rotundity of the earth, that every twenty-four hours it revolves on its own axis, and that every year it makes a journey round the sun, describing an orbit of one hundred and ninety millions of miles in diameter ?

Did not the way they talked about the *ends*, the *corners*, the *pillars*, and the *foundations* of the earth show positively that they knew nothing about its being round, swinging in space, and resting upon nothing ?

Can it be that thou wert ignorant of these simple facts; that thou couldst not write it in thy book or could not convey the intelligence to those thou employedst to write for thee?

Had the writers of the Bible the least adequate idea of the size, number, and distances of the stars which so gloriously stud the vast vault of space?

Did they not regard them as mere glimmering points, placed in a firmament not far from the earth, and exclusively for the benefit and pleasure of the inhabitants of this small globe?

Did they not regard the earth as the centre of the Universe, and by far the greatest portion of it, while it is now known that it is but an infinitesimal part of the Universe, and that there are thousands and probably millions of blazing orbs larger than the sun, and larger even than the entire solar system combined?

Did not the writer of the first book in the Bible think that the sun is a small affair, gotten up expressly for the use of the earth, and was not brought into existence until the earth was old enough to produce all varieties of vegetation—trees, shrubs, plants, and grains, each perfecting its fruit and seed in a perfect manner?

Was he not ignorant of the great fact that without the light and heat of the sun not one stalk of corn nor one spear of grass could grow out of the earth?

Do not such blunders show the most palpable ignorance on the part of those thou didst employ to write thy book?

Is there any other conclusion to come to than that either thou didst not thyself know about the facts of the Universe which thou hadst created, or that the people who assumed to write a book for thee, and who have since been set up as men inspired by thyself to write for thee, were not employed by thee at all, and that they wrote at their own option, jotting down such truths and errors as they happened to be in possession of?

Were not Bibles or "Sacred Writings" somewhat common with many of the ancient nations?

Did not the Egyptians have their sacred writings? Did not the Hindoos have theirs, the Chaldeans theirs, the Per-

sians theirs, the Phœnicians theirs, the Arabians theirs, the Grecians and Romans theirs, and in later times have not the Shakers and the Mormons had theirs?

Were not all these Bibles, and many more not mentioned, just about as divine and about as true as the one gotten up in the Jewish nation?

Didst thou not have as much to do with all of those Bibles as thou hadst with any particular one?

Is there not a similarity between them in point of ability, talent, and truthfulness?

Do they not all exhibit a vague, indefinite, mythical, oracular style of composition not found in modern works of science?

Is it not correct in us to look upon all those old Bibles as merely human productions, written in no case by the hand of any deity, and not dictated from the head of any deity whatever, possessing no value to the present inhabitants of the earth save as land-marks and finger-posts on the record-page of Time, indicating the progress which mankind has made from the low plain of primitive ignorance to the better-informed mental elevation now occupied?

Is it not about time that enlightened people should cease to worship and bow down to those old Bibles like they were idols or fetishes?

Is it not far better that mankind should explore the astronomical Universe, delve into the very bowels of the earth, become acquainted with the properties of all forms of matter, whether in concrete, solid, fluid, aerial, or etherial conditions, the chemical combinations of all substances, the character of all forms of life—to study these, and to understand the intricate laws of the Universe, of which we form a small part—than to be hugging to their breasts the musty, imperfect old Bibles of the past days of ignorance under the delusion that deity is in them more than in the vast Universe with all its combinations and forms of existence?

Great Jehovah, were not the persons who wrote thy book, the Bible, greatly at fault when they talked about the stars falling from heavens to the earth?

Are not all the stars that we can behold on a clear night

many hundred times larger than this diminutive globe, and if one body was to be attracted to another, would not the earth be far more likely to fall to one of the stars than for the stars to *fall* to the earth ? and would not the earth be far more likely to be attracted to the sun than to the far more distant stars?

Was not the writer of Genesis greatly in error when he said there was no rain upon the earth until after the existence of vegetation of all kinds ? Could it be possible for trees and plants to perfect themselves when there had never been a drop of rain upon the earth?

Do not geologists find abundance of proof by the impression of raindrops in both the Silurian and Devonian rocks which existed on the surface of the earth long before it produced any vegetation?

Is it not true that rain fell in immense quantities, and evaporated again rapidly when the surface of the earth and the surrounding atmosphere was at a high degree of heat, and this for thousands of years before there was a spear of grass, a tree, or a shrub growing upon the earth ?

Did not the writer of Genesis have a very crude and imperfect idea of how the operation of rain is produced when he talked about "the fountains of the great deep being broken up," and "the windows of heaven being opened," that the water might descend ?

Did he not think that heaven had a water-tight floor interspersed with windows, gates, or sluice-ways, which had to be opened when rain fell to the earth, and closed when it was time for the rain to cease ?

Could an ignorant Esquimaux or Hottentot have a more childish and erroneous idea of the phenomenon of rain ?

Were there not thousands of ages after the surface of the earth cooled so that the rocks crystalized or congealed before they oxidized or decomposed to make soils and to produce the conditions by which there could be any vegetation, and during all this time was there not abundance of rain on the earth ?

Was not the writer of Genesis much mistaken when he said that grass, herbs and fruit-trees were created before the lower orders of animal life ?

Do not geologists find proofs that cannot be disputed that the lower orders of life such as the *radiates*, the *mollusks* and the *polyparia*, and these followed by fishes and reptiles existed before there were fruit-trees or even grass growing upon the earth?

Did not sea-weeds and other water-plants grow for incalculable years before trees bearing seeds and fruits, or grass and flowers had an existence?

Do not all geologists agree that the lowest fossiliferous rocks yield only marine forms of vegetation and low down in the scale of organization?

Is there not a great discrepancy, too, in the statement that birds and fowls of all kinds came into existence at the same time with the lower orders of animal life, the jelly-fish, star-fish, the coral animals, clams, oysters and fishes?

Did not all the lower grades of animal life which live in the water have an existence for a great length of time before birds, quadrupeds and mammals came upon the stage?

Was it not untrue, then, to say they were all created on the same day?

Is it not equally untrue that man was created on the same day with beasts, cattle and creeping things?

To the reverse of this, do not geologists find the remains of creeping things or reptiles as low as the time of the carboniferous period, while the signs of cattle are not found till the tertiary, which must have been long ages after, and did not man come into existence near the close of the tertiary period, possibly millions of years later than the advent of beasts and cattle?

Does not thy book teach that man first came into existence less than six thousand years ago? Is there not abundance of proof showing that the bones of the human race have been found in caves and under deposits, side by side with the bones of races of animals long since extinct, proving that man in a wild, savage state has lived on the earth twenty times as long as the Bible says he has?

Is it not strictly true that there were many races of men in existence at the time when the Bible was written, and whose offspring have since continued to occupy the same

portions of the earth with whom the Bible-writers had no acquaintance at all?

Is not the Bible nearly as defective in what it omits to state as in the incorrect details which it purports to give?

Does it make any allusion to the original highly-heated condition of the earth, of which there are so many positive proofs?

Is not the surface of the earth much cooler than when penetrated to the depth of a few hundred or a few thousand feet?

Is it not true that the temperature of the earth increases one degree to every fifty feet as we descend towards the center, and is it not highly probable that if two hundred miles could be penetrated everything would be in a state of complete fusion?

Was not the surface of the earth during an immense period so hot that no organized life could possibly exist upon it?

Had the writers of the Bible the slightest idea of this state of things, and does not their silence upon the subject prove their utter ignorance of the facts?

Is not the Bible entirely silent upon the subject of the *glacial period* which scientific people find abundance of proof had a real existence, and that by the movement of vast bodies of ice immense rocks were carried great distances?

Does not the Bible ignore the vast changes that have taken place upon the surface of the earth—the changes in the bounds of the sea, the sinking of some islands and the rising of others?

Did not the Bible writers think the earth was permanent and unchangeable; that the bounds of the ocean were set, beyond which the waves could not pass?

Are there not large portions of our own country now covered with cities, villages, and productive farms, that were once below the surface of the sea?

Are not sea shells and other marine fossils now found in elevated grounds hundreds of feet above the level of the sea? Did the Bible writers know anything about the existence of the great American continent? and could they have had the necessary information to write an intelligible history

of this globe while totally ignorant of the existence of more than half of it ?

Were not the writers of the Bible ignorant of the character of many of the phenomena of nature ? Did they understand the causes of eclipses ? Did they know the causes of the changing of the seasons ?

Did they have correct ideas of the nature and origin of the rainbow ? Is it true that the first rainbow appeared about four thousand years ago ? Is it not a perfectly natural phenomenon produced by the rays of the sun falling upon mist or descending rain ? and has not the bow been produced for four hundred thousand years—as long as there has been a sun to shine and water to fall in rain ?

Were not those writers ignorant of the existence of volcanos, of burning mountains, and of the causes and nature of earthquakes ?

Is it not a crude and incorrect idea that thou didst become weary with labor and wert under the necessity of abstaining from toil that thou mightest rest and be refreshed ?

Who conducted the operations of the Universe whilst thou wert resting ? Who caused the earth to revolve daily on its axis and to keep up its steady yearly course around the sun ? Couldst thou do this and abstain from labor at the same time ?

Is not the story of the Flood untruthful in many respects ? Is it true that thou couldst get so angry at the thousands of persons thou hadst brought into existence that thou wouldest wish to drown them, together with great numbers of innocent and helpless animals ?

Is it true that all the water that exists in connection with the earth is sufficient to rise to the tops of the highest mountains—thirty thousand feet, or more than five miles in depth ?

Is it not correctly estimated by scientific men that all the moisture the atmosphere is capable of carrying would not amount to water enough to make more than one foot in depth over the entire earth ?

Where, then, did all the water come from to reach an altitude of five miles ? and where could it all go when dry land reappeared ?

Is it true that a vessel or ark five hundred and fifty feet long, ninety-one feet wide, and fifty-five feet high, could contain seven of every kind of bird and seven or two of every kind of animal and insect, together with the food to sustain them over a year?

As at the present time there are known to be 6,266 distinct varieties of birds, seven of each would be 43,852; of beasts over 5,000; reptiles nearly 1,000; of snails, etc., more than 9,000, and of insects 1,500,000—taking them in pairs as commanded, would it be possible for all this mass of animated life, with a year's supply of food, to be packed in such a vessel?

Could Noah and his family have gathered all these varieties from the various zones, continents, and islands of the earth, though they had worked centuries at it, and none of the animals or insects had died while being thus gathered together?

Or are we to understand that thou movedst upon the minds or organizations of the nearly three millions of animals, little and big, to induce them to march up to Noah from all parts of the globe for the purpose of taking a sea voyage to "be saved"?

Would it be possible for that great aggregate of diversified animal life stowed into that ark at the rate of 120 animals, insects, etc., to the square yard to live for three hours shut up in that vessel pitched without and within, and with but one door and window, and they closed?

Would it have been possible for old Noah, Mrs. Noah, their four sons and their wives to take care of that numerous family, each of the ten persons having over 200,000 birds, animals, and reptiles, and insects to look after?

Must not the stench of all those wild animals, reptiles, etc., thus so closely and compactly confined have been terrible in the extreme? Was not the accumulation of the dung a pretty big affair in the course of thirteen months? Was it not a pretty hard task for Noah and his family to put up with it all for so long a time?

Would it not have required two or three arks of the size occupied to hold the food alone for such a great number of animals? Was it not difficult to supply such animals as lived

upon the flesh of other animals, that required fresh leaves altogether, that required ants, worms, bugs, insects of all kinds, and even honey? Where were the supplies obtained?

Did not the animals require their daily food in the ark as well as elsewhere?

Did not the food have to be provided in advance, or didst thou perform a miracle every day, and extemporize all the various kinds of food the animals needed?

Would it not have taken hundreds of men a long time to gather, cure and store in the ark all the different kinds of food the animals required?

Did not the soaking of the roots of the trees and of all kinds of vegetation, for a year or more, completely drown them out so that thou wert under the necessity of re-creating all kinds of trees, shrubs, and plants? Should not two of each kind of trees and plants have been taken into the ark as well as the animals? Would not a year under water be as fatal to vegetable as to animal life?

As the top of Mount Ararat, where the ark is said to have rested, is about 17,000 feet above the level of the sea and 5,000 feet above the line of perpetual snow and ice, was not the cold intense enough at that high altitude to have destroyed a large portion of the animals in the ark before they could possibly have descended where the temperature was mild? How could the animals of the torrid zone possibly have stood such an extreme degree of cold?

What, again, did that vast number of animals, birds, and insects, find to live upon when they emerged from the ark and when all animal and vegetable life had been destroyed upon the face of the earth? Would not great numbers inevitably have starved to death?

Are there not altogether too many utter impossibilities connected with the "Flood Story" for any such state of things ever to have happened or for thee to ever have engaged in writing such an untruthful narrative?

Is it not probably an old legend that was handed down from early days of ignorance, and is it not far more likely that no such events ever occurred, or that thou ever employedst thyself in dictating to anybody such a tissue of impossibilities and falsehoods?

Is a book made up of such wild vagaries and untruthful stories worthy the consideration, veneration, and belief of intelligent people in this enlightened age of the world? and is it not far better for rational, reasoning beings to examine what they are called upon to believe, rather than to gulp down every kind of false and ridiculous story that may be handed down from past ages of the world?

Great Jehovah, are there not many statements made in thy Bible wholly at variance with the laws which govern the Universe, which are opposed to the observation and experience of mankind and wholly beyond the range of possibility?

Is it not a mistake that there was never a rainbow until after the flood, about five thousand years ago? Is not the rainbow produced by the rays of the sun falling upon mist or drops of water, and has not this result been produced as long as there has been a sun to shine and drops of water to fall? Thus, was not the rainbow as really "set" in the clouds five hundred thousand years ago as five thousand?

Is not the statement that Moses and Aaron changed rods into snakes, dust into lice, all the water in Egypt—including the great river Nile—into blood, that they produced frogs in immense numbers, as well as locusts, etc., etc., very greatly exaggerated or wholly untrue?

Can it be true that the water of seas and rivers by certain motions or ceremonies made by men, could part and stand up like walls while millions of men and cattle passed over without being at all wetted? Is it possible for water to act in any such manner?

Could a man or any other being by any possibility arrest the motion of the sun, the moon, the earth, or any of the globes or spheres that revolve in space? Are not the motions of the stars and orbs that exist throughout space wholly independent of all persons and all beings? Are they not controlled by forces or laws which cannot be interfered with or set aside?

Is it not untrue that any day since the morning of time was several hours longer than all the rest of the days that have passed?

Has not the evaporation of water from the surface of the

earth, and its descending again in the form of rain and dew, been a process that has been in operation as long as the earth has had existence ? Is it not untrue, then, that there was ever a period of three years and over when neither rain nor dew fell upon the face of the earth ?

If such a drouth had taken place, would not every tree, every shrub, every plant, every animal, and every human being inevitably have perished from the earth long before the end of the term ?

We would enquire, too, how the vapor for so long a period arising from the earth and never descending, could be sustained by the atmosphere ? Is it not a well known law that the atmosphere is capable of holding up but a limited amount of water when in a state of vapor, and when that limit is reached the water must fall back to the earth again ? Would it not be absolutely impossible for one month, even, to pass away without rain or dew descending to the earth ? If from certain arid localities the currents of air impel the vapor to other parts, must it not of necessity fall somewhere else ? When the atmosphere is surcharged and full, like a sponge, is it not impossible for it to hold more ?

Is it not impossible for man, who is adapted to live upon the surface of the earth and to breathe the atmosphere which weighs fifteen pounds to the square inch, to be taken up above the atmosphere and live even for the space of five minutes ? If the pressure of the atmosphere was thus suddenly removed would not his blood-vessels be immediately ruptured ? Would not blood burst from the lungs, the mouth, the nostrils, and other parts of the body, and death inevitably ensue ?

Deprived of the oxygen which the atmosphere contains, would not a man die as surely and as quickly as a fish when removed from the water ?

Is it not impossible for a man weighing one hundred and fifty pounds, more or less, to overcome the power of attraction which draws all bodies to the earth, so as to rise into the ether above the atmosphere ?

If this possibility could be accomplished, would not the intense absense of heat in the upper regions—reaching a degree of cold, as scientists estimate, of four or five hun-

dred degrees below zero—render the existence of human life utterly out of the question ?

Could an animal fitted to live upon the earth exist for five minutes, even, when there is neither oxygen nor warmth ?

Is not the story of Elijah, then, or of any other individual, going bodily up into the upper regions and continuing to live, utterly impossible ?

Is it not clear that the person who wrote the story of Elijah knew nothing about the laws which govern human life or that he did not care how extravagant he made his statements ?

Is not the story of Jonah being three days in the stomach of a fish, deprived of all possibility of getting air to breathe, equally absurd and impossible ? If a man were to be so incarcerated, would he not die for want of oxygen in a very few minutes ?

In this view of the case, is it not absurd to retail such stories of utter impossibilities to intelligent people and demand that they shall be believed ?

Is not the story of three young men being thrown into a superheated furnace, without receiving the slightest injury, of a similar character ? Is it not utterly impossible for the human organism to be brought into contact with the intense heat of several thousand degrees and remain uninjured for one moment ?

Are not the laws governing life as imperative as any that have existence ? As these laws are from the highest power, are they not absolute, and is there any other power capable of setting them aside ?

Are there not many statements made in the newer part of the Bible equally devoid of possibility ? The existence of a person in human form, having body and organs, living by the food he ate and the air he breathed, and coming into the world without a natural father, we have already considered, and come to the settled conclusion that a being never existed on the earth that had not a natural father, and who did not originate by the same process that inaugurates all animal life. Is it not positively true that there cannot be a son without a father with parts and organs like himself ?

The earth being a globe, or sphere, is there a mountain-top in Syria, or any other point, from whence a person could view all parts of the world? Owing to the convexity of the earth, is it not utterly impossible for the sight to follow its surface more than a limited number of miles? Was not the person who wrote the story of Jesus " beholding at one view all the kingdoms of the earth " ignorant of the fact that the earth is a round ball, and that a very limited portion of it can be seen from any point?

Is not the statement that the sun was shrouded in darkness for three or more hours not only improbable but impossible? Is not the light generated by the sun too intense to be destroyed for a single moment?

Is not the avowal that the earth was so shaken that it was rent, and the graves opened, the dead bodies rejuvenated and enabled to walk into Jerusalem and hold intercourse with their former friends, wholly incredible?

If by any possibility such events could take place, is it not likely that more than one man would know something about them? Would they not have been referred to by all the historians of the time? Would saint Matthew have been the only one to have spoken of it?

Is it not entirely impossible for a body from which life has departed to be reanimated and again made a living being?

While there have been numerous cases of suspended animation, when life *appeared* to have departed, and resuscitation has been effected, is it not just as impossible to reanimate a corpse absolutely dead as it would be to animate a log or a bank of clay?

Are not, then, the stories about Elijah and Elisha bringing dead persons to life wholly incredible? Is not the story of Lazarus and others being made to live again after they were fully dead an equal departure from the truth?

Is not the statement that Jesus made a journey of eight thousand miles, to the centre of the earth and back, in the space of thirty-six hours between his burial and his resurrection a very remarkable story?

As the interior portion of the earth is intensely hot, and greatly compressed by the pressure of surrounding matter,

would it not be very difficult for a being to get through it at the rate of two hundred and twenty-two miles an hour, allowing not a moment to be passed at the centre?

If such a journey were possible what could be gained by making it? Was any good accomplished by thy Son making that trip to the centre of the earth?

Is not the statement a silly one, based upon no reliable authority whatever, and one which only simple people can believe?

Not wishing to be too prolix in enumerating all the extraordinary statements made in the Bible, we would ask, are there not hundreds of stories similar to the ones here alluded to, which requires a great amount of credulity to accept, and many impossibilities to overcome to be true?

Were not these stories written in an age of the world when it was the custom to minister to the marvelous in human nature, and to detail occurrences which could not possibly have taken place?

May it not be set down for a truth that if thou hast established the laws which govern the Universe thou wouldest not act against thyself and set them aside?

Are these laws not as imperative as thyself, and incapable of being ignored or superseded? Would it not be just as reasonable to talk about setting thee aside and superseding thy existence for a brief period, as of setting aside the immutable and irrevocable laws of the Universe which pertain to all forms of life and all conditions of existence?

Is it not far more probable that the many stories and incidents of the character indicated were the product of illy-informed men, and written to amuse or astonish minds still less informed, gotten up in an age, too, when marvels and wonders were the peculiarity of all their literature, than that they were written by thy hand or dictated by thy brain?

Is it possible that the source of all knowledge, wisdom, and truth would descend to the telling of absurd and impossible stories for the sake of increasing admiration for himself on the part of ignorant people?

Are not the laws and forces of the Universe, those denominated *natural causes*, sufficient for all the results that have ever occurred? Has a single result of any kind oc-

curred in any portion of the Universe which was not produced by a sufficient natural cause? Is it not wholly needless to introduce supernatural powers or causes into the Universe, even were such a thing possible?

Would not a being of infinite goodness present the great truths of life and of the Universe to the men and women he wishes to benefit, rather than bewilder them with monstrous narratives which could not possibly be true nor do them the least good, merely to excite their wonder and to cause them to think he was a being capable of setting his own immutable laws aside, and of acting against himself?

Is not the disposition plain to be seen, in all the ancient writings of various nationalities, to get up marvels, and unnatural events? Did this trait not arise from deficient knowledge of the Universe and its laws, and a belief in monstrosities and in unnatural and impossible existences?

As men advance in the knowledge of Nature and Nature's laws, of the material and forces of the Universe, that every event is the result of a natural cause, do they not believe less and less in the marvelous, the miraculous and the impossible?

Is not a belief in the unnatural, in the marvelous and the impossible injurious to mankind? and is it not calculated to keep them in ignorance and superstition, depriving the race of much of the knowledge and happiness they might otherwise attain?

Is not the day fast approaching when all the myths, miracles, and absurdities of the past ages of the world will cease to be revered as great truths, and when the practical, vital truths of Nature and of life and of science, will be regarded as of far greater consequence than all the old big stories and impossible narratives of the past ages of ignorance? ✓

Great Jehovah, if thou art the author of the great book called the Bible; if thou didst write it thyself, or causedst thy chosen servants to write it according to thy will and desire, are we not justified in looking for nought but purity and excellence in it?

If we find that which is sensual, vulgar, and obscene, are we not correct in concluding that such portions, at least, of the volume did not proceed from thy holy mind?

Even if the old patriarchs and those on whom thou wert pleased to bestow thy special favor, were guilty of vile and sensual conduct, didst thou take pleasure in transmitting the same or in causing it to be transmitted for succeeding generations ?

Was the story of thy servant Lot getting drunk on different occasions and committing the crime of incest with his two daughters an affair worthy to be incorporated in thy holy word ?

If it was true that Sarai, the wife of Abraham, induced her husband to hold sexual commerce with their servant-girl, Hagar, was it a matter required to form a part of thy revelation to mankind ?

Is the story of the worse than beastly conduct of the Sodomites a pretty one for the young male and female members of thy family to read ?

Is the detailed description of every time that old Jacob had intercourse with his two wives and his two concubines or hand-maids, with the effect thus produced, essential to be told in thy holy volume ?

Could not the narrative about the process by which Jacob cheated his father-in-law, Laban, in procuring striped and speckled cattle with propriety have been omitted ?

Is not the story of the amour between Schechem and Dinah, together with the sad loss of life which grew out of it, one of which the tenor is more corrupting to the young mind than purifying ?

Is the lustful conduct of Reuben with his father's concubine, Bilhah, a nice story for little boys and girls ?

Is the story about Judah's cohabiting with his son's wife, who arrayed herself as a harlot and laid in wait for him on the highway, such a kind of godliness as is delightful to hold up to the unexperienced as a guide and example ?

Was the part that Onan played in the narrative such a one as should be explained to the comprehension of the rising generation ?

Were the designs which Mrs. Potiphar had upon the saintly Joseph, when she asked him to lie with her of such a character as entitles them to be held up for other wives to study and practice ?

Is the portion of thy holy law as given in Leviticus xv. well suited as lessons for Sunday-school children to study and ponder over ?

Does Leviticus xviii., which gives full instruction as to the nakedness of which relatives shall not be uncovered, make good reading lessons for the young of both sexes in our public schools ?

Does Leviticus xx. treat of such pure and heavenly subjects that the youth of our country, both male and female, can profit by in carefully studying ?

Are portions of Numbers v., giving instructions how a husband and the priest shall proceed with a wife when the husband is jealous of her, commendable literature for inexperienced minds ?

Is the account in Numbers xxv., where Zimri held sinful connection with Cozbi in the sight of all the congregation of Israel, whereupon Phineas, the priest, run them both through the body, a suitable subject for thy children to meditate upon before they assemble to worship thee ?

Is Numbers xxxi., wherein is related the killing of mothers and the male children of the Midianites and the keeping of the young girls for the use of the soldiers, and all by thy command, a study calculated to stimulate our admiration for thy mercy, kindness and purity ?

Is it a matter of probability that in a nation of pagans or idolators, that thy servants could find thirty two thousand women who had never lain with man ?

Were not the processes and tests necessary to be applied to ascertain the fact, of a highly interesting character, though possibly before the close a trifle monotonous ?

Would it not have been interesting to know how many women passed through the necessary course of examination to find thirty-two thousand who had never lain with man ?

As the statistics are not given, would not an estimate that the total number of women examined must have been at least one hundred thousand to find thirty-two thousand virgins, a very moderate one ?

If one hundred thousand women of any Christian country to-day were submitted to such a test as the Midianite women were compelled by thy command to endure, would

more than thirty-two thousand be found whom men had never approached ?

~ Were the tokens of virginity which in Deuteronomy xxii thou didst prescribe to be observed of the same character as were used with the girls of Midian and also the same that were later used among the young females of Jabesh-gilead, as given in Judges xxi, 2-25?

Are the exactions thou laidst upon thy people when wounded in their private parts such as thou wishest them to observe to-day?

Was not thy judgment upon the bastards a very severe one? Is a bastard really to blame for being a bastard? Was that law in operation at the time of the Virgin and Child?

Is not the law in Deuteronomy xxxiii, 12-14, about paddles being carried for a certain purpose rather a curiosity? Wouldst thou really have been in danger of being defiled if this law had not been carried out?

Is not the law given in Deuteronomy xxv, 2, another curious one for a god to give?

Is the story of Sodomy and lust as detailed in Judges xix, 22-29, a beautiful one for youth to meditate upon?

Is the amorous story of thy servant David watching from his housetop to see his neighbor Bath-sheba when she was taking a bath a fit one to be carefully and frequently studied by young men and women?

Does not Psalms xxxviii, claimed to have been written by David, sound very much as though he had contracted a very offensive and loathsome disease?

Is the account of David's son Amnon committing a rape on his own sister the best kind of reading for children and youth?

Is the conduct of another of David's sons, Absalom, when he held sexual connection with the concubines of his father on the housetop in the sight of all the people, the choicest kind of reading to impart pure thoughts?

Are the details of the lascivious Solomon, who is held up as a remarkable wise man and a favorite of thine, with his seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, the best kind of mental pabulum for those in search of purity and heavenly-mindedness.

Is the delectable and highly amorous composition called "The Song of Solomon," wherein the charms and fascinations of the male and female forms are described in glowing and passionate language, the most proper kind of reading matter for maturing boys and girls?

Are there not many passages in the writings attributed to thy holy prophets which are neither modest nor suitable for reading in schools or in a mixed company of ladies and gentlemen?

Is not Ezekiel xvi, with its sixty-three verses, a case in point? and are not parts of Ezekiel xxiii. of a similar character?

Are not the Jewish Scriptures more replete with broad and indelicate stories and allusions than the Bibles of the other ancient nations? Do these not teach morals as pure, as elevated, and quite as worthy of belief and veneration?

In view of these portions of what is called thy "Holy word," with the many others not here referred to, is there not ample room for the gravest doubts of their being the productions of thy spotless mind, an emanation from thy immaculate spirit?

Do not these portions of the ancient Jewish writings sound far more like the productions of crude and partially developed minds who had made but slight advancement in the culture and refinement which pertains to the highest civilization?

Whatever may have been the origin of these old writings, containing as they do so much that is crude, coarse, indelicate, libidinous, obscene and wholly inadapted to the present condition and needs of mankind, are they not unfit for a reading book in our public schools, for a text-book for Sunday-schools, or as an object of special worship and veneration for millions of our partially progressed minds who feel that they want something mystical and miraculous to embrace, clasp to their bosoms, and like a fetish bow down to and worship?

Will not the world, when it has attained to a high degree of mental culture, and has become familiar with all departments of scientific truth, be able to dispense with all the relics of past mysticism, superstitions and absurdities,

when men and women will love and revere that only which is pure and that only which is true ?

Great Jehovah, we are taught to regard thee as unchangeable, immutable, and infallible, and that the Bible is an emanation direct from thy hand or thy brain. If this is so are we not justified in looking for infallibility, harmony, and perfect agreement in thy word ?

If we find that it is contradictory—that one part clashes with another, that one passage disputes what is asserted in another passage, have we not good grounds to decide that it is not the work of thy faultless hand, but that it is of human origin, and, like everything else produced by man, is defective and imperfect ?

Is it possible for a God without weakness, without fault, without inharmony, to produce a work that is replete with imperfections and contradictions ?

Is it not a perfectly legitimate and proper course for us to pursue in arriving at a correct conclusion as to the origin of the book called the Bible, to examine it closely and critically, to see whether it contains blemishes and imperfections, and whether it possesses qualities and characteristics that are above the ability of man to produce ?

If we find that in addition to its contradictions and incompatibilities, it contains nothing superior to what is found in other books which men have written, are we not right in believing that this book was also written by men with human fallibilities ?

As a faulty and imperfect piece of workmanship is positive proof of the defective mechanic who executes it, so, is not a book that contains numerous misstatements and contradictions the strongest evidence that can exist that it is not the production of a perfect, infallible being ?

Does it not say in Genesis i, 31, "And God saw everything he had made, and behold it was very good"? And in chapter vi, 6, does it not say, "And it repented the Lord that he hath made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart"?

Is there not a serious discrepancy here? If the work of thy hand was so good and so perfect as to meet thy entire

approbation, is it probable thou wouldest so soon become displeased with it as to wish thou hadst never made it ?

In 2 Chron., vii, 12 and 16 does it not state that thou hadst chosen the temple which Solomon had builded for thy permanent residence, and that thou wouldest dwell there perpetually; and in Acts, vii, 48, does it not expressly state that the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands ?

In 1 Timothy vi, 16, does it not say that thou dwellest in the light which no man can approach unto ? In Kings viii, 12, does it not as emphatically state that thou wouldest dwell in thick darkness ? In Psalms xviii, 11, does it not say thou madest darkness thy secret dwelling-place ?

In Genesis iii, 9 and 10, Exodus xxxiii, 11 and 23; xxiv, 9, 10, and 11; Gen. xxxii, 30, and Isaiah vi, 1, does it not state that thou wast seen as a man is seen, and that thy voice was heard the same as a man's voice ? In other places, as in John i, 18, v, 37; Ex. xxxiii, 20, and 1 Tim. vi, 16, is it not stated that thou canst not be seen at any time; that no man has ever seen thee, and that none can see thee and live ?

Could anything be more contradictory than this, thou canst be seen and was seen, and that thou canst not be seen and wast never seen ? Must not one of these statements necessarily be untrue ?

In Exodus xxxi, 17; Isaiah xlivi, 24, and Jeremiah xv, 6, are we not informed thou didst become weary and needed rest, while in Isaiah xl, 28, it states that thou art not weary ? Can both be true, that thou art weary and art not weary ?

In many passages of the book is it not expressly stated that thou art everywhere, and that thy eyes are constantly looking upon all parts of the Universe, and in other places does it not as explicitly state that thou wert under the necessity of visiting certain places in order to see how things were and what had been done ?

If thine eyes keep in constant view all parts of the earth, was it necessary for thee to "come down" to see the city and the town which men had builded, or to visit the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in order to see whether they had done as thou commandedst ? If thou art always present in

all places, could Adam and Eve hide themselves from thy presence ?

In Psalms xliv, 21, and cxxxix, 2 and 3, and Acts i, 24, are we not told that thou knowest the hearts of men, that thou knowest all their ways and the very secrets of their hearts, while by other passages, as in Deut. xiii, 3; viii, 2; Gen. xxii, 12, are we not informed that thou wert under the necessity of testing and trying and proving thy servants in order to know what was in their hearts and minds ? If thou at all times knowest all things, is it ever necessary for thee to experiment, or take pains to learn something thou already knowest ?

In many passages is it not stated in the strongest language that all things are possible with thee, and that nothing is too hard for thee to accomplish; but in Judges i, 19, is it not confessed that whilst thou wert able to drive out the inhabitants of the mountain, thou *couldst not* drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had chariots of iron ? Was iron indeed more than a match for thy power ?

In numerous passages, as James i, 17, Malachi iii, 6, Ezekiel xxiv, 14, Numbers xxiii, 19, and many others, does it not state in the strongest language that thou art unchangeable, that thou changest not, and that thou *never repentest*; and in contradiction to this is it not as expressly stated in Gen. vi, 6, Jonah iii, 10; 1 Sam. ii, 30, 31; 2 Kings xx, 1, 4, 5, 6, and Ex. xxxiii, 1, 3, 14, and 17, are we not as pointedly assured that thou changest thy mind, that thou didst often repent, and wert sorry for what thou hadst done ?

In Psalms xcii, 15, Gen. xviii, 25, Deut. xxxii, 4, Rom. ii, 11, Ezek. xviii, 25, Deut. x, 18, 19, and other passages, are we not fully assured that thou art just, righteous, and strictly upright in all cases, and that thou treatest all with strict justice and impartiality; while in Gen. ix, 25, Ex xx, 5, Rom. ix, 11, 12, 13, Mat. xiii, 12, Deut. xiv, 21; 2 Sam. xxiv, 17, and elsewhere, are we not informed that thou didst curse some of thy children; that thou didst visit upon the children of the third and fourth generations the iniquities of their grandfathers and great-grandfathers, that thou

didst show favor and partiality, and that thou didst send curses and judgments upon innocent parties ?

In a multitude of places, as in Psalms xix, 7, 8, Deut. xxxii, 4; 1 Cor. xiv, 33, James i, 13, etc., are we not assured in the very strongest language that thou art all goodness and justice, and that in thee is neither iniquity, confusion, nor evil, and in other parts of the book, as in Lam. iii, 38, Jer. xviii, 11, Isaiah xlvi, 7, Amos iii, 6, Ezek. xx, 25, as well as elsewhere, are we not informed that thou not only doest evil unto men, but that thou art the author of evil, and doest all the evil that is done in the world ?

In James i, 5, and in Luke xi, 10, are we not assured that thou wilt freely give to those who ask of thee, while in John xii, 40, Josh. xi, 20, and Isa. lxiii, 17, we are informed that thou didst harden the hearts and blind the eyes of thy children that they should not understand, nor see, nor be healed ? Didst thou not take measures to cause the destruction of those who had called upon thee ?

Is not the promise given in Prov. viii, 17, and in Mat. vii, 8, that those that ask shall receive, and that those who seek shall find; while in Prov. 1, 28, Isa. i, 15, and Ps. xviii, 41, the contrary assertion is made that those who call upon thee shall not be answered ; that those who seek thee early shall not find thee, and that thou wouldest hide thyself from those that seek thee; that when prayers are offered up thou wilt not hear, and that when cries were offered up to thee thou wilt not attend them, and will answer not ? Can a being who makes such contradictory promises and statements be relied upon ?

In Rom. xv, 33, and in 1 Cor. xiv, 33, does it not say that thou art the God of Peace, while in Ex. xv, 3, Ps. cxliv, 1, and Isa. li, 15, and many other places, does it not say thou art a God of War, the Lord of Hosts, the God of Battles, and that thou teachest the hands to war and the fingers to fight ?

In James v, 11, Lam. iii, 33, 1 Chron. xvi, 34, Ezek. xviii, 32, Ps. cxlv, 9, and xxv, 8, and 1 Tim. ii, 4, does it not say that thou art kind, merciful and good ? that thou art filled with loving kindness; that thou dost afflict none willingly; that thy mercy endureth forever; that thou art good to all;

that thy tender mercies are over all; that thou art love, and goodness, and uprightness, etc., while in other passages, as in Deut. vii, 16, and iv, 24, Joshua x, 11, 1 Samnel xv, 2, 3, and vi, 19, and Jer. xiii, 14, that thou wilt not have pity nor spare; it says thou wilt not have mercy; that thou wilt consume thy people; that thine eye shall have no pity, that thou art a consuming fire, and thou didst throw down stones from heaven upon men and kill them? Are not the two characters thus given thee the most contradictory ones that can be conceived of? Can both be true?

In Psalms xxx, 5, and ciii, 8, are we not told that thy anger endureth not a moment; that thou art merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy? while in other passages, as in Exodus iv, 24, Numbers xxv, 4, and xxii, 13, Psalms vii, 11, and Jer. xvii, 4, and elsewhere, are we not assured that thy anger was frequently kindled against thy people; that thou didst command that they be put to death, and that thou art angry with the wicked every day? Can it be possible that both these descriptions are true of the same being?

Is not the assurance given in Exodus xxix, 18, 36, Leviticus i, 9, and xxiii, 27, that thou didst command, approve of, and delight in burnt offerings, and in the blood of rams, bullocks, etc., while in other passages, as in Psalms l, 13, 14, Isaiah, i, 11, 12, 13, Jer. vi, 20, and vii, 22, it explicitly states that thou not only didst disapprove of burnt offerings, sacrifices, and holy days, but that they were not sweet or acceptable unto thee; that incense is an abomination unto thee; that new moons and Sabbaths are an iniquity; and that thou delightest not in the blood of bullocks, rams and goats? Would it not appear from this that thy tastes were subject to very great changes?

In Deuteronomy xii, 30, 31, didst thou not forbid human sacrifice, while in Genesis xxii, 2, Leviticus xxvii, 28, 29, Judges xi, 30-39, and 2 Samuel xxi, 8, 9, 14, didst thou not expressly command it or acquiesce in it? Were not, then, thy moods variable?

In James i, 13, is not the positive assertion made that thou temptest no man? while in Genesis xxii, 1, 2 Samuel xxiv, 1, Job ii, 3, Jeremiah xx, 7, and Matthew vi, 13, it is

emphatically stated that thou didst tempt Abraham, David, Job, and others ? Are both of these statements true ?

In Numbers xxiii, 19, and Hebrews vi, 18, is it not clearly stated that thou canst not lie, while in Judges ix, 23, 1 Kings xxii, 23, Jeremiah iv, 10, and xiv, 18, Ezekiel xiv, 9, and 2 Thes. ii, 11, are we not told that thou usest deception; that thou sendest a delusion; that thou puttst a lying spirit in the mouths of thy prophets; that thou sendest an evil spirit; that thou deceivedst thy prophets, etc. ?

In Genesis vi, 5, 7, are we not told that on account of the wickedness of man, and the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart, which were evil continually, thou didst decide to destroy man whom thou hadst created from off the face of the earth, while in chapter viii. 21, thou didst decide equally as firmly that thou wouldst not again curse the ground for man's sake, nor any more smite every living thing, notwithstanding the imaginations of man's heart were evil from his youth ? Do not these passages indicate that thy mind had undergone a slight change ?

According to Romans i, 20, are not the invisible things pertaining to thee from the creation of the world clearly seen and understood by things that are made, even thy eternal power and Godhead, while in Job xi, 7, and Isaiah xi, 28, we are expressly told that thou canst not be found out by searching, and that there is no such thing as searching thy understanding ?

In Deut. vi, 4, 1 Cor. viii, 4, and other places, are we not assured that there is but *one* God, while we are to understand by Gen. i, 26, iii, 22, and xviii, 1, 2, 3, 1 John v, 7, and elsewhere, that there is a plurality of Gods? Are both true ?

In Exodus iii, 21, 22, and xii, 35, 36, didst thou not command thy people to commit theft and robbery, while in Exodus xx, 15, and Lev. xix, 13, didst thou not positively forbid stealing and robbing ? Didst thou really command and forbid the performance of the same act ?

By Exodus i, 18, 20, Numbers xiv, 34, Joshua ii, 4, 5, 6, 1 Samuel xvi, 1, 2, 1 Kings xxii, 21, 22, Romans iii, 7, 2 Cor. xii, 16, and James ii, 25, are we not to understand that thy lying and falsehood were approved and sanctioned? while

in Exodus xx, 16, Proverbs xii, 22, and Revelations xxi, 8, are not lying and deception positively forbidden? Is lying, then, sometimes approved and sometimes disapproved by thee?

In Exodus xxxii, 27, 2 Kings, x, 11, 30, and other places, was not killing positively commanded, while in Exodus xx, 13, it is positively forbidden? Is there not a contradiction in these commands?

In Genesis ix, 5, 6, didst thou not require that every man who shed the blood of his brother should die? and in Genesis iv, 15, didst thou not specially provide that the man who had shed the blood of his brother should *not* be put to death?

In Exodus xx, 4, didst thou not positively command that no image or likeness of anything in the heaven above or in the earth beneath should be made, and afterwards, in chapter xxv, 18, 20, didst thou not expressly command the making of two images or cherubims with wings?

In Genesis ix, 25, Leviticus xxv, 45, 46, and Joel iii, 8, is not slavery approved and commanded, and in Exodus xxi, 16, and xxii, 21, Isaiah lviii, 6, and Matthew xxiii, 10, is it not clearly disapproved and forbidden? Does it not look like blowing "hot and cold" upon the same usages? Canst thou at the same time love and hate the same thing?

Great Jehovah, according to the words of thy Son, in Mat. vi, 28-34, are we not enjoined to take no thought of the future, or the morrow, as to what we shall eat or drink or wear? and are we not instructed to "consider" and pattern after the lilies of the field, which neither toil nor spin? while, according to Tim. v, 8, are we not told with equal emphasis that, if a man does not make provision for the future in preparing for his own household, he denies the faith and is worse than an Infidel? In Prov. vi, 22, are we not also told that a man should leave an inheritance to his children?

According to Eph. iv, 26; 2 Kings ii, 24, and Mark iii, 5, is not anger approved, while in Eccl. vii, 9; Prov. xxii, 24, and James i, 20, is it not greatly disapproved?

In Mat. v, 16, are we not instructed to let our light so shine that all men may see our good works, while in Mat.

vi, 1, are we not expressly commanded not to do our alms before men to be seen of them ?

In Mat. v, 39, are we not told to resist not evil, and if we are smitten on the right cheek to turn the left cheek to be smitten also, while in Luke, xxii, 36, is not an opposite course prescribed ?—if we have no sword to fight with, are we not commanded to sell our garment and buy one ?

In Gen. xvii, 10, is not circumcision directly enjoined, while in Gal. v, 2, is it not explicitly condemned ?

In Gen. ii, 3, and in Ex. xx, 8, is not the Sabbath sanctioned and commended as superior to other days, while in Isa. i, 13, Rom. xiv, 5, and Col. ii, 16, is it not spoken lightly of and represented as no better than the other days ?

In Ex. xx, 11, does it not say the Sabbath was established because thou hadst worked six days and needed to rest on the seventh, while in Deut. v, 15, didst thou not say it was established because thou hadst brought thy people out of Egypt with a strong hand ?

According to Ex. xxxi, 15, Num. xv, 32, 36, is not the performance of the slightest amount of work on the Sabbath most positively condemned, and was not life to be taken as a penalty for laboring on that day, whereas, according to John v, 16, and Mat. xii, 1, 2, 3, 5, did not thy alleged Son completely disregard the Sabbath and set it aside ?

According to Mat. xxvii, 19, is not baptism positively commanded, while in 1 Cor. i, 14, 17, is it not clearly ignored ?

In Gen. ix, 3. 1 Cor. x, 25, and Rom. xiv, 14, are not all animals recommended as good, and is not one kind pronounced as clean as another, while in Deut. xiv, 7, 8, are not many varieties of animals denounced as "unclean" and positively forbidden as food ?

In Gen. xxi, 23, 24 31. Num. xxx, 2, Neh. xiii, 25, Isa. lxv, 16, and Heb. vi, 13, is not the taking of oaths sanctioned and fully recognized as being right, while in Mat. v, 34, are not all oaths positively prohibited ?

In Gen. i, 28; ii, 18, Mat. xix, 5, and Heb. xiii, 4, is not marriage clearly sanctioned and approved, while in 1 Cor. vii, 1, 7, 8, is it not clearly disapproved ?

In Deut. xxi, 10-14, and xxiv, 1, is not freedom of divorce clearly permitted, while in Mat. v, 32, is it not restricted ?

According to Num. xxxi, 18, Hos. i, 2, and iii, 1-3, is not adultery sanctioned and commended ? while in Ex. xx, 14, Heb. xiii, 4, and in other places, is it not positively forbidden ?

In Eph. v, 25, 29; Ep. i. vi. 2, and 1 John iii, 15, is not hatred of kindred condemned, while in Luke xiv, 26 is it not positively commanded ?

In Deut. xiv, 26, Judges ix, 13, Ps. civ, 5, and Prov. xxxi, 6, 7; 1 Tim. v, 23, and other passages, are not wine and strong drink recommended, as cheering the heart and being good for the stomach, while in Prov. xx, 1, and Prov. xxiii, 31, 32, is it not denounced ?

According to Eccl. viii, 2, 5; Mat. xxiii, 2, 3; Rom. xiii, 2, 3, 6, and 1 Peter ii, 13, 14, is not the duty of obeying rulers, ministers, etc., set forth; while in Ex. i, 17, 20; Dan. iii, 16, 18; Mark xii. 38, 39, 40; Acts iv, 26, 27, and other passages, is not the opposite set forth ?

In Gen. iii, 16; 1 Cor. xiv, 34; 1 Tim. ii, 12; 1 Peter iii, 6, are not woman's rights denied: while in Judges iv, 4, 14, 15, and v, 7; Acts ii, 18, and xxi, 9, are they not affirmed ?

In Col. iii, 22, 23; 1 Pet. ii, 18, is not duty to masters enjoined; and in Mat. iv, 10, and Mat. xxiii, 10, is not the opposite commanded ?

In Gen. i, 25, 26, 27, does it not say that man was created after the other animals; while in Gen. ii, 18, 19, does it not state that man was made before the animals ?

In Gen. vii, 1, 25, does it not say Noah took the clean beasts into the ark by sevens; while in the same chapter, 8, 9, does it not say they were taken in by twos ?

In Gen. viii, 22, is not the promise given that seed time and harvest should *never* cease; while in Gen. xli, 54, 56, and lv, 6, does it not say that seed time and harvest did cease for seven years ?

In Exodus iv, 21, and ix, 12, does it not say thou didst harden Pharaoh's heart so that he would not let thy people go; while in Ex. viii, 15, does it not say that Pharaoh hardened his own heart ?

In Ex. ix, 3, 6, does it not state that all the cattle and horses in Egypt died; while in Ex. xiv, 9, does it not say that the Egyptians pursued after thy people, and were not they and lots of horses drowned in the Red Sea ?

In Gen. xi, 12, does it not say that Arphaxad was the father of Sala; while in Luke iii, 35, 56, does it not say that Canaan was the father of Sala ?

Does it not say in Mat. ii, 14, 15, 19, 21, 23, that the infant Jesus was taken into Egypt for safety; and in Luke ii, 22, 39, is not an entirely different statement made, and nothing said about his being taken into Egypt ?

In Mark i, 12, 13, is not an account given of Jesus being tempted forty days in the wilderness, immediately after his baptism; and in John ii, 1, 2, does it not state that the third day after his baptism he attended the marriage of Cuna in Galilee, and performed his first miracle ? Does either of the other evangelists mention anything about that first and most extraordinary miracle ?

In Mat. v, 1 and 2, does it not say that Jesus preached his first sermon sitting on a mount; while in Luke vi, 17, 20, does it not say it was a plain ?

In Mark i, 14, does it not say that John was in prison when Jesus went into Galilee; while in John i, 43, and John iii, 22, 23, does it not say John was not in prison when Jesus made that little journey ?

In Mark vi, 8, 9, were not the disciples commanded to take a staff and sandals; and in Mat. x, 9, 10, were they not commanded to take neither staves nor sandals ?

In Matt. xx, 30, does it not say two blind men sat by the wayside and hailed Jesus as he passed, while does not Luke in narrating the same circumstance, speak of but one blind man ?

Does not Matthew (viii, 28), say Jesus met two men coming out of the tombs, while Mark (v, 2), says it was but one ? Was it a peculiarity of Matthew to see double ?

Does not Matthew say thy son was crucified about the third hour, while John says it was the sixth hour ?

Do not Matthew and Mark both say thy Son was reviled by both the thieves who were crucified with him, while Luke says it was one ?

Does not Matthew say vinegar and gall were given him to drink, while Mark says it was wine and myrrh?

Does not John say that Satan entered Judas while at supper, and does not Luke say it was before supper?

Does not Matthew say Judas returned the thirty pieces of silver, while is it not stated in Acts that he bought a field with them?

Is there not a serious discrepancy about the manner of Judas' death? Does not Matthew say he hanged himself, while in Acts is it not stated that he fell and burst himself asunder, and all his bowels gushed out?

Does not John say one woman came to the sepulchre, while Matthew says it was two, while Mark has it three and Luke near a half dozen? Were they accurate counters?

Does not Luke say two angels visited the sepulchre, and that they *stood*, while Matthew and Mark speak of but one, and say he *sat*? In this instance, where Matthew had the lesser number, was it because it was a spirit and hard to discern?

Does not Matthew and Luke say that the women went and told the disciples of the resurrection of Jesus, while Mark says they said not a word to any man about it?

Do not Mark and John say that Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene only. Does not Matthew say he appeared to the two Marys, while Luke has it that he appeared to neither of the Marys.

According to Matthew was not Jesus to be three days and nights in the heart of the earth, but according to the authorities was he more than two nights and a day in his grave?

Does not Matthew say that the disciples were immediately after the resurrection commanded to go into Galilee, while Luke says they were commanded to tarry in Jerusalem?

Does not Luke and John say that Jesus first appeared to the eleven disciples in a room in Jerusalem, while Matthew has it that it was on a mountain in Galilee?

Is there not an unaccountable and unpardonable discrepancy about the place of his ascension? In Acts (i, 9, 12), does it not say he ascended from Mount Olivet, while Luke has it that it was from Bethany, Mark that it was in a room

where the disciples sat at meat, while Matthew and John had nothing to say about it? Was it a matter of so small consequence that they had not a word to say upon the subject of his departure from the earth?

Was the writer of Hebrews xi, 17, correct in speaking of Isaac as the only begotten son of Abraham? Was not Ishmael regularly begotten, and had not Abraham several other sons who were all begotten?

Did not Abraham, being one hundred years old, require thy help to beget Isaac, but afterwards beget at least six children without any divine assistance?

Did not thou in Gen. xiii, 14, 15 and other passages, promise to Abraham the land of Canaan and to his seed forever, while by Acts vii, 5, and Heb. xi, 9, 13, is it not plain that the promise was never kept, and that his seed never actually received the Promised Land?

By 2 Chron. xxii, 1, is it not clear that Ahaziah was the younger son of Jehoram, while by 2 Chron. xxi, 16, 17, is it not equally clear that Jehoahaz was the youngest son?

By 2 Kings viii, 17, 24, 26, does it not appear that Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, being eighteen years younger than his father, while by 2 Chron. xxi, 29, and xxii, 1, 2, that he was forty-two years years old and two years older than his father? Is it easy for a son to be older than his father?

Does it not say in 2 Sam. vi, 23, that Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no children to the day of her death, while in 2 Sam. xxi, 8, are not the five sons of Michal mentioned?

Does it not say in 2 Sam. xxiv, 1, that thou movedst thy servant David to say, "Go number Israel and Judah," while in 1 Chron. xxi, 1, does it not explicitly state that it was Satan who provoked him to do it? Does it not follow, then, that thou and Satan are one and the same person or that one of these statements is false? How are men to decide which is the true and which the false?

Is there not a rather palpable disagreement between the results of that census given in the two different books? In 2 Sam. xxiv, 9, does it not say that the warriors of Israel numbered 800,000 and of Judah 500,000, while in 1 Chron.

xxi, 5, are the numbers not given at 1,100,000 of Israel and 470,000 of Judah? If the two writers were equally inspired by thee, is it not singular how they should disagree to the amount of nearly 300,000? If one is false, how can we tell which is the one?

According to Samuel, did not David sin in numbering the people, although moved by you or by Satan, as the case may be, while in 1 Kings xv, 5, does it not say that David never turned aside from anything thou commandest him save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite?

According to 2 Sam. x, 18, does it not say that David slew on a certain occasion seven hundred Syrian charioteers and forty thousand horsemen, while in 1 Chron. xix, 18, is the number not given as seven thousand charioteers and forty thousand footmen? Was seven hundred and seven thousand both right, and were *horsemen* in one place and *footmen* in the other equally correct?

Is it true in both statements that David paid fifty shekels of silver for a threshing floor, including a lot of cattle as given in 2 Sam. xxiv, 24, and in 1 Chron. xxi, 25, where it says he paid six hundred shekels of gold? Is there not too much difference in the two statements to both be true?

Is it not stated in 1 Sam. xvii, 4, 50, that David slew Goliah, while in 2 Sam. xxi, 19, taking out the words which the translators supplied, does it not say that Elhanau slew him? If the latter is the true statement, does it not deprive David of a great share of the early reputation that was accorded him?

Does not thy word teach that children are punished for the sins of their parents, and that they are not punished for the sins of their parents? That man is justified by faith alone, and that he is *not* justified by faith alone? That it is impossible to fall from grace, and that it is not impossible to fall from grace? That no man is without sin, and (1 John iii, 9, 6, 8) that Christians and those born of thee cannot commit sin? That there is to be a resurrection of the dead, and that there is to be no resurrection of the dead? That rewards and punishments are bestowed in this world, and that they are to be bestowed in the future world? That annihilation is the portion of mankind?

(Job iii, 11-22 ; Eccl. ix, 5, 10; Eccl. iii, 19, 20), and that endless misery is the portion of all mankind ? That the earth is to be destroyed, and that it is never to be destroyed ? That no evil shall happen to the godly and that evil does happen to the godly ? That worldly good and prosperity are the lot of the godly, and that worldly misery and destitution are the lot of the godly ? That worldly prosperity is a blessing and a reward for righteousness, and that worldly prosperity is a curse and a bar to a future reward ?

Does not thy word teach that the Christian y. ke is easy and that it is *not easy*? That the fruit of God's spirit is love and gentleness, and that the fruit of God's spirit is vengeance and fury ? That prosperity and longevity are enjoyed by the wicked (Job xxi, 7, 8, 9 ; Ps. xvii, 14 ; Eccl. vii, 15 : Jer. xii, 1), and that prosperity and longevity are denied to the wicked ? (Job xviii, 5, 12, 18, 19 ; Eccl. viii, 23 ; Ps. lv, 23 ; Job xxxvi, 14) That poverty is a blessing ; that riches is a blessing, and that neither poverty nor riches is a blessing ? That wisdom is a source of enjoyment, and that it is a source of vexation, grief and sorrow ? That a good name is a blessing, and that it is a curse ? That laughing is commended and that it is condemned ? That the rod of correction is a remedy for foolishness, and that it is no remedy for foolishness ? That temptation is to be desired, and that it is not to be desired ? That prophecy is sure, and that it is not sure ? That man's life was to be one hundred and twenty years, and that it was to be seventy years ? That miracles are a proof of divine mission, and that they are not a proof of divine mission ? That Moses was a very meek man, and that he was a very cruel man ? That all Scriptures are inspired, and that some Scripture is not inspired ? That Elijah went bodily up to heaven, and that no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man ? (John iii, 13.)

Is it not extremely difficult to understand how a God of perfect truth can talk on both sides of so many subjects, and how he can contradict himself pointedly in so many instances? Is it possible that a God of perfect truth can state so many contradictions, half of which at least must be

untrue, or that he would influence anybody to write them ? Is it not far more reasonable to conclude that these various writings were produced by different men at different times, and that they are not chargeable directly to thee ? Is it not perfectly easy for men to be in error, but impossible for God to be mistaken ?

Great Jehovah, while we have under consideration the book called thy "revealed word," allow us to make a few more inquiries concerning it.

Is it not quite proper that we should examine it critically and obtain all the information about it possible ? If it teaches that which is not for the best good of mankind, have we not just grounds for doubting its infallibility, and its emanation from the source of all truth and excellence ?

In point of literary excellence does it surpass all other books that men have written ? Are its narratives any better told, is its history any more correct, is its philosophy any deeper, its poetry any finer, or its morals any more sound than are found in other books in the world ?

In the sacred writings of the Hindoos, the ancient Persians, Chinese, Egyptians, and other nationalities, is there not quite as much voluminousness, quite as much spirituality, quite as much philosophy, quite as much poetical imagery, quite as much purity, and far less of obscenity, far less of vulgarity, far less of war, carnage and bloodshed, than is found in thy book ?

In point of antiquity does it not fall far short of what has been achieved by men in other directions ? Were not the cuneiform inscriptions of the ancient Assyrians and the inhabitants of Nineveh—brought to light and interpreted within the last few years by the two noted Englishmen, George Smith and General Rawlinson—executed long before thy book was written ?

In those cuneiform inscriptions, are not the sources found from whence the Jewish writers obtained the idea of the cosmogony embraced in thy book ?

Were not the legends of the creation of the world, of the formation of man and woman, of the temptation and fall, of the great flood of waters which came upon the earth,

inscribed in those arrow-head shaped characters long before thy book was written? Did not thy people become familiar with those ancient Assyrian legends and fables during the time of their Babylonian captivity, and did they not carry back those same legends when they returned to their own country?

Did not other Asiatic nations have traditions about an Adam and Eve, or *Adama* and *Hera*, which were regarded by them as the parents of the human race, and of a part of it occupying a certain portion of the earth?

Do not the hieroglyphics of Egypt, which were inscribed upon their ancient temples, obelisks, and pyramids possess a far greater antiquity than does thy revealed volume?

Is it not true that the two forms of written language, the cuneiform of Assyria and the picture writing of Egypt, were used thousands of years before an alphabet was brought into use?

As the Hebrew was written with an alphabet, does it not follow that the Bible was written at a much later date than the arrow-head inscriptions of Nineveh or the hieroglyphics of Egypt?

Is there any proof that any part of the Bible—save perhaps the Gentile book of Job—was written at an earlier date than 700 B.C.?

Does it not appear from thy word that thy written law was not in the possession of thy people until the priest Hilkiah, in the reign of King Josiah, claimed to have found it in the temple?

When the same was read to the King, did it not produce consternation, showing that it had before been wholly unknown?

Was it not quite possible that the priest Hilkiah and his scribes could have gotten up certain manuscripts and called them thy law, and in that character have passed them off upon the King? Has not a similar game been played many times?

When thy people were held seventy years in captivity in Babylon, did they not lose their sacred writings, and when they returned to their own land, were they not under the necessity of getting them up again?

Is not the account of how it was done given in 2 Esdras xiv, how he drank a cupful of something of the color of fire, which made wisdom to grow in his breast and caused his heart to utter understanding, and his mouth was opened and shut no more? How five men, receiving understanding, wrote visions of the night that were told them; how for forty days they wrote in the day and at night they ate bread, and that during that time they wrote two hundred and four books? Are we to understand that such was the process by which thy book was gotten up?

Were not some of the books of the Old Testament written as late as the time of the Maccabees, 250 B. C.?

As many of the prophets are regarded as being the oldest books in the Bible is it not a little singular that neither of them mention the name of Moses? Had they known that he was for forty years in daily communication with thee talking with thee often face to face, checking thee when thou wert too inconsiderate and hasty and advising thee as to the most proper course to pursue, that he received thy holy law from Sinai and transferred it to parchment, would they not at least have mentioned his name?

Does not this fact, combined with others, go far to confirm the belief that many entertain, that Moses never had a real existence and that like Menes of Egypt, Minos of Greece he was a copy of the ancient Menu of India?

Is it not true that the greater portion of the books of the Old Testament were written after the return of the Jews from their captivity, and were not many of the historical narratives given in them new drafts upon a fertile imagination?

Did not those who returned from Babylon feel the necessity of having a national history and a national religion and having learned much of the Chaldeans, was it not easy for talented priests to get up those books and invent the details therein contained? Would it be any more remarkable than the production of the thousands of other works of fiction which men have written?

When we come down to the New Testament, is it not equally true, that neither thy son nor any of his disciples, or apostles, wrote one word of the books therein contained?

Did not nearly two centuries pass away from the commencement of the present era before it was known to any of the early Christian fathers that either of the New Testament books was in existence?

Was not the Christian Father Irenæus near the close of the second century the first who mentioned the existence of either of the four gospels, and was he not fully capable of writing them?

For three or four centuries was it not a source of great contention among the dignitaries of the Church to decide which of the numerous gospels and epistles that were floating about among the believers, equally claiming to be authentic and inspired documents, were genuine, and which spurious?

Were not several councils of bishops and priests called together during the third, fourth and fifth centuries to decide which of the many books that had been written should be accepted as true and which should be discarded?

During these councils did not the most bitter contentions arise and did they not quarrel and fight in the most outrageous manner at times—even to the taking of life—disgracing themselves and the cause they attempted to serve?

When one council had decided what books should be regarded as genuine did not succeeding councils set their decision aside, expunging certain books they had admitted and accepting others which had been discarded?

Were those contentious bishops and priests really a class of men fitted to decide which writings were sent from heaven and which not?

Was there really any proof that the accepted manuscripts were of divine origin any more than those rejected?

Was there the slightest proof that either was of divine origin? Were they not all written by men; did they not all contain the imperfections common to the works of men?

Did they not contain narratives of certain events that had transpired, or were claimed to have transpired, and were they not detailed in the style in which men in that age of the world gave their narratives? And were not the letters and epistles written in much the same style that others have written epistles at various periods?

Was there any thing in the style or matter of those writings beyond the power of man to perform ? And is it not absurd to ascribe them to a supernatural source or causes when natural causes were at hand and sufficient to produce all that was accomplished ?

Is there not enough in the uncertain authorship, the vagueness as to the time when the books were written, the mediocre character of the literary talent displayed in their production, the hundreds of positive contradictions they contain, the crudeness and vulgarity which in many parts is so conspicuous, the great want of truthful and scientific knowledge of the simplest operations of nature everywhere evinced, the unmistakable indications of human workmanship at all times apparent, and unskilled at that, to make sensible people honestly doubt that the book is the work of an all-wise God or that it is of heavenly origin ? Are they not quite correct in assigning it to the realm of human productions ?

Great Jehovah, are there not many characteristics appertaining to thy revealed word, not yet alluded to, which are well calculated to shake the confidence of thinking people in its divinity ?

While it narrates the occurrence of many events impossible to have taken place in unison with the laws of the Universe, which are never superseded, does it not omit to state important eras and events which have had a certain existence ?

Does not the Bible fail to say anything about the upheaval of mountains and continents which is now well-known to have occurred from time to time since the earth existed ?

By the marine deposits, sea-shells, etc., which have been found on the summits of the highest mountains in the world, like the Himalayas in Asia and the Alps in Europe, and many of the mountains and hills on this continent, have we not conclusive proof that they once emerged from the bed of the ocean ?

Were they not by the forces in the interior of the earth

projected, rapidly or slowly, from beneath the waters of the ocean to the altitude they now occupy ?

Have not these mighty upheavals occurred at various times over the entire surface of the globe? Do not all the mountains and hills over the earth, in the strata of rocks, gravel, clay, etc., afford the clearest proofs that upheavals have taken place?

While islands and continents have sunk beneath the waters of the oceans, have not others arisen in other localities? Have not these changes taken place on the earth for thousands of years?

Does the Bible contain any allusion to these momentous events, or does it intimate that anything of the kind has ever occurred?

Does it make the slightest allusion to the Glacial Period, when, in the long ago, from about the 40th degree of north latitude to the pole, both on the Eastern and Western Hemisphere, immense masses of ice, rocks, gravel and clay, moved by the action of water, were carried to great distances, to be finally melted by the action of the sun's rays, depositing the rocks and earths thus removed, to be left as "drift," by which term such deposits are now known?

Are there not abundant proofs in the rubbed, worn, scratched and polished surfaces of rocks where such drift is found that those immense bodies of ice, rocks and earth did move from place to place in the manner described?

Does not the silence of the Bible upon this important subject show conclusively that the writers of the book had no knowledge that there ever was such an era in the history of the globe? If the writers knew aught of it, should they not have said something about it, even though it preceded by thousands of years the advent of man upon the earth?

Is it not a little singular that the great Continent of America, extending nearly ten thousand miles, embracing all varieties of climate, and destined to be the home of millions of the human race, was wholly unknown to the writers of thy book?

If they drew their inspiration from the source of all knowledge and truth, how is it that so important a matter,

so connected with the life of man on the earth, was never alluded to ?

Is not this silence respecting America more noticeable when the fact is taken into consideration that there are very strong proofs that America is the oldest part of the globe, and that it existed as a continent long before the Himalayas or the Alps had been raised from the depths of the ocean, and when we have the clearest reasons for thinking that it was populated by civilized and cultured people who built cities and executed works of art at a time earlier than when the Bible was written ?

Are not the errors and inaccuracies of the Bible sufficient to cause thinking people to doubt its divine origin ? Is it possible that with thee there is a possibility of making mistakes and committing errors ?

Were not all the books of the Bible copied and re-copied many times ? and is it not true that they were mere transcripts of transcripts, with errors and changes creeping in with every new copy made ?

After what is called King James' translation was published, in 1611, was it not found by Bishops Tenison and Lloyd that thousands of errors had crept in ?

In 1669 did not Dr. Blayney correct a multitude of errors that had not before been discovered ? and did he not reform the text in many places and correct the defective chronology in many instances ?

In view of the great numbers of errors the book contained, did not the British and Foreign Bible Society, after issuing and circulating millions of copies, declare that a faithful examination of it gave rise to serious doubts as to whether it can truthfully be called the Word of God ?

Did not the American Bible Society, in 1847, appoint a committee of its members to prepare a standard edition of King James' version free from errors, and did they not prepare such an edition, correcting, as they confessed, twenty-four thousand errors ? and did not the fear of the consequences of making so many changes alarm them so greatly that they decided to defer making the corrections ? and are they not to this day continuing to circulate in vast

numbers a book which, by their own acknowledgment, contains twenty-four thousand errors ?

Is it not true that the Bible Revision Committee in England, which for nearly ten years has been industriously engaged in making changes and improvements in thy revealed word, gives out the information that the present version contains some one hundred and fifty thousand errors of one kind and another ?

When they shall have completed their work, and the changes are all made, when they shall have the improved Word of God all completed, is there not danger that it will be so changed from the Bible we knew in our childhood that we can scarcely recognize it as the same production ?

If the book is right now as it has been accepted for two hundred and fifty years, will it still continue to be right when such a great number of changes shall have been made in it ? If it is a divine and perfect production, can it possibly be right to tamper with it so extensively ?

Let us ask, again, when the fact is brought to our minds that so many errors exist in thy book, is it not enough to destroy all belief in its being directly from thy brain and thy hand ?

Can it be possible that the highest confidence and veneration can always be cherished for a book that requires such extensive doctoring, tinkering, and remodeling ?

Is not the influence which the Bible has exerted on woman a great argument against its divinity ? Has it not placed her in subjection to the opposite sex and persistently held her in that degraded position ?

With a few exceptions, were not the women of the Bible mere slaves to the male sex ? and were they not regarded as ministers to the sensual passions of men ? Was the disposition anywhere shown to accord to woman the position in society and in the affairs of life that justly belongs to her ?

In view of the fact that the Bible has recognized polygamy, which at best is a relic of barbarism, is not that quite enough to shake one's belief in its divinity ? Can it be possible that the great father of all goodness connives and co-operates with that vile institution ?

Did not many of thy most marked favorites, among whom may be named Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, David, Solomon, and others, openly practice polygamy ? and is there an instance where thy word ever discountenanced them on account of their indulgence in the degrading practice of having a plurality of wives ?

Could men be really first-class patriarchs and saints who were so sensual that their passions could not be gratified short of from five to one thousand different women ?

Has not the Bible damaged its claim to divinity by its advocacy of human slavery ? Does it not recognize in numerous instances that unrighteous institution ?

Can it be possible that a being who is equally the kind parent of all races and peoples should lavish all his favors on one special race, and willingly see others subjected to slavery and oppression without lifting a finger or saying a word to prevent it ?

Is not slavery wholly incompatible with divinity, as it is with true humanity, and is it not an axiomatic truth that a book which recognizes and authorizes the slavery of one human being to another, or of one race to another, cannot come from a divine source ?

Is not the partiality and favoritism for particular individuals and a special race of men that is all through to be seen in the Bible, a strong proof that it is not of divine origin ? Can the kind providence, who is as much the parent of one as of another indulge in partiality and unjust preferences ? Should not his love and kindness be bestowed upon all his children alike ? Is not the very fact that the claim for this kind of favoritism is set up strong presumptive proof that it is all the invention of the people thus supposed to be favored ?

Is not the sanction which the Bible gives to murder, war, and bloodshed, another strong proof that it is not the outbreathing of divinity ? Are we for a moment to believe that the Divine Being could take pleasure in cruelty, the taking of life, the shedding of blood, the extermination of whole races of men, and the devastation of whole countries by war and desolation ?

Must it not be obvious to every person who has a clear

conception of Deity that narratives that teem with the details of carnage, pillage, massacres, bloodshed, wars, and wholesale murders, are the work of a semi-barbarous, unprogressed people, rather than an emanation of the divine Mind ?

Has it not been the effect of the Bible to retard science, and hold its devotees in the belief of crude errors—or rather to prevent their knowing the truth—about the age and form of the earth, the magnitudes and distances of the heavenly bodies, the nature and chemical qualities of the primates or simple forms of matter, of the eternal union between matter and force, of the laws of chemical affinity in the formation of all component forms of substance, and much else in that direction ? Is it not opposed to the nature of divinity to purposely keep men in ignorance and darkness ?

When we find in that book the strongest proofs of ignorance about the substance of which the earth is composed, about the stratified formation of its crust, about its great age, its connection with the planetary system, including the sun; about the vast number, vast size, and vast distance of the fixed stars or suns, are we not fully justified in concluding that the creator of all, who must necessarily know all about it, had nothing to do with the getting up of the book ?

Is it not a proof that Divinity had little to do in writing that book when the fact is borne in mind that it recognizes and approves of human sacrifices, as in the case of the sons and grandsons of Saul, and "those devoted to the Lord," as described in Leviticus xxxii, 28, 29 ? Is not the great severity evinced toward witches or those supposed to be bewitched, saying they should not be suffered to live, etc., a clear proof that there was no divinity in the injunction, very little humanity, and a great deal of ignorance, superstition, and cruelty ?

Have not the inhuman enactments contained in the Bible against the unfortunate class of persons denounced as witches been the apology and impetus for the putting to death in Europe during a term of years of not less than one hundred thousand unfortunate victims adjudged of

being guilty of witchcraft, and the by no means small amount of similar persecution that was meted out to the same unfortunate class in this country ?

Were not all the zealots engaged in the diabolical work of hunting up, tormenting, and putting to death in the most cruel manner conceivable, those unfortunate wretches, all firm believers in the divinity and infallibility of the Bible ?

Is it not a strong argument against the divinity of the Bible that in its very earliest chapters it placed a stigma upon labor, and made it a punishment for errors committed on the part of inexperienced man ?

Is not the idea inculcated that but for the untimely eating of some specimens of fruit, man would never have needed to toil and labor for his livelihood, and that he could have passed his days and years in ease and idleness ?

. Has not this idea been a most mischievous and fallacious one ? Is not labor one of the most ennobling qualities known to man ?

Had man always lived in idleness, would he not have remained in a savage state ? Was a race of idlers ever known to progress in civilization and enlightenment ?

Has not labor been one of the greatest blessings that man has possessed ? Has it not subdued the wild forests to lovely habitations and beautiful cities ? Has it not whitened the ocean with millions of sails ? Has it not made highways and railroads over the civilized globe ? Has it not made the earth to teem with bounteous crops ? Has it not been the source of all the wealth, all the comforts, all the luxury, all the civilization that man possesses to-day ?

Is it not, then, untruthful and opposed to the spirit of divinity to represent labor as a curse to man, and that indolence and idleness are superior to it or more to be desired ?

Is not the advice which thy son is said to have given his hearers equally mistaken and unsound when he instructed them to take no thought for the future as to what they should eat or drink or clothe themselves withal ?

If these instructions were carried out, would it not destroy all enterprise, all preparation for our wants and

necessities, and render mankind thriftless, poverty-stricken mendicants ?

If men and women should make no more provision for the winter season and old age than do the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, would they not inevitably starve to death by thousands and hundreds of thousands ?

Is it not an impracticable, misleading assurance that thou wilt provide food and clothing for those who lift not a finger to provide for themselves ? Is it not far better to teach men the importance of their being enterprising and prudent, in securing the necessaries of life for themselves and their families, and that thou helpest those most who help themselves ?

Is it not really anti-divine to instruct men to become idle and improvident—mere houseless and homeless beggars ?

Does not thy book uphold capital punishment ? Is not its code a code of vengeance, and was not the most cruel punishment in thy law meted out for the most trivial offenses ?

Is it not an indication that the Bible is not divine that it recognizes and tacitly approves of kingcraft and tyranny on the earth ?

Has it not been opposed to the best interests of the race that the many should bow down to and worship the few who manage to wear crowns of gold or silver or iron ? Has not the oppressive rule of kingcraft and priestcraft greatly retarded man in his march towards the higher elevation of mental and civil liberty ?

Are we to understand that thou art in favor of this sort of thing ? that you want the few to govern and override the many and make them mere abject slaves in the world ?

Is it true that such a government on earth is modeled after thy government in heaven ? Is it true that thou art a great king, sitting on a throne, governing thy vassals with severity and despotism, leaving them no alternative but to submit to thy rule or burn in flames of fire forever ?

Has not the tyranny of the Bible, and much, also, that has existed in the world, arisen from the supposition that thy rule was one of compulsion of the many to the one ?

Has not thy government on earth been modeled after the

supposed government of heaven ? Is tyranny on earth any better than tyranny in heaven ?

Was Ingersoll far out of the way when he said, "There can be no liberty on earth while men worship a tyrant in heaven ?"

From the points alluded to, and many others not here touched upon, are not men fully justified in doubting the divinity of the book which teaches all these things ? Are they not more correct in thinking that it was written by unprogressed men, and that it contains the crude and barbarous notions that prevailed in the world at the time it was written ?

Great Jehovah, has not a great imposition been palmed off upon the world in regard to the writers of the books in the older part of thy volume, and also as to the time when they were written ?

Is there the slightest proof that the books composing the canon of the Old Testament were written by a man named Moses ?

Is the claim even set up in any part of the book that Moses ever wrote a word of it ? Did Moses himself ever say that he wrote any part of it ?

Is there any proof that the children of Israel ever had a law in their possession called a Holy Law from thee, given by inspiration, prior to the time, some six hundred years before the Christian era, when the priest Hilkiah set up a claim, as narrated in 2 Kings xxii, that he had found such a law in the temple, or thy house, and the scribe Shaphan took it to the King Josiah and read it to him, producing great consternation in the mind of the King, even causing him to tear his clothes ?

Does not the very fact that thy law had such a fearful effect upon the King, and upon the elders of Israel who heard it read for the first time, show conclusively that they had never before known nor heard anything about it ?

Does not this statement effectually set aside the claim that the law was written by Moses and had previously existed among thy people, and does it not prove conclusively that no such written law had ever been known ?

Again, when thy people, the Jews, were taken in captivity to Babylon, and during their residence there of seventy years, did they not lose their saercd writings, so that when they returned to their own land they were under the necessity of re-writing them ?

Did not the priests Nehemiah and Ezra, and more especially the latter and his numerous scribes, take it upon themselves to reproduce thy law and thy sacred writings ?

Is not an account of the manner in which the work was performed given in the book of Esdras, where he was commanded to open his mouth and drink what was given him, when he drank something that was like water but of the color of fire, and which "made his heart to utter understanding, and wisdom to grow in his breast, when his mouth was opened to be shut no more—when he and his scribes were told things they knew not before?

Did they not do their eating at night and spend the days in writing books containing thy word ?

Did they not thus continue writing for forty days, during which time they wrote two hundred and four books ; and wast thou not reported to have said : "The first thou hast written, publish openly, that the worthy and the unworthy may read it, but keep the seventy last that thou mayest deliver them openly to such as are wise among the people"?

Is it not perfectly natural that people in this age should entertain some honest doubts about the authenticity and reliability of a work thus produced ?

Even if Esdras, after drinking the liquid which possessed the quality of fire, was caused by its effect on him to write thy word and will, is there any certainty that his scribes could have been similarly influenced, when they had drunk none of the fluid ?

Was that peculiar liquid imbibed by Esdras anything of the character of the alcoholic fluids now in use in the world, called brandy, rum, whiskey and gin ; and if so, would not the inspiration which it imparted be of a very suspicious and uncertain character ?

Has it not been held by many of thy favorite people that thy writings were reproduced by Ezra after the return of the Jews from captivity ?

Did not Hattel say, "The ancient Jews have a tradition that the Mosaic law had been burned at the time of the captivity, and that it had been reproduced by Ezra, and the tradition was received as trustworthy by Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Chrysostom and Theodoret"?

Did not the Christian Father Irenæus say that "they (the books of the Old Testament) were fabricated seventy years after the Babylonish captivity by Esdras"?

Did not the pious and learned Dr. Adam Clarke guardedly say, "All antiquity is nearly unanimous in giving Esdras the honor of collecting the different writings of Moses and his prophets, and reducing them into the form in which they are now found in the Holy Bible"?

Can it, with any show of reason, be claimed that writing so produced, or reduced, by an ordinary man, should be regarded as thy authentic word, given from thy throne in heaven?

If the deeds and records of a county were all to be destroyed, by fire or otherwise, and there was nothing to show who the owners of the numerous pieces of property are within the bounds of the county, or where the lines of division are, and some modern Ezra should assume, after drinking a peculiar fluid that appeared like water but had the nature of fire, should claim that he was able to reproduce and re-write all the deeds and mortgages, showing the true titles and bounds of all the real estate in the county, would anybody accept such a reproduction as the genuine deeds and documents?

If the public could not believe that such a modern Ezra could be able correctly to write out all the deeds and mortgages that had been in existence, how can they any more have confidence in an ancient Ezra, when he claimed to rewrite thy holy word which must of necessity be of vastly greater consequence than the title deeds of any and all the counties in the world?

Is it likely that man in olden times would be any more truthful or correct in writing what he knew nothing about than if he lived in this age of the world?

What are we to conclude became of the books so badly lost that Ezra and all other priests failed to produce

them ? more especially such books as "The Wars of Jehovah," "Joshua's Division of the Holy Land," "The Annals of Gad," "The Life of Solomon," "The Acts of Rehoboam," "The Chronicles of Judah and Israel," "The Book of Jashur," "The Life of Hezekiah," "The Life of Manasseh," "The Prophecy of Ahijah," "The Book of Shemaiah," "The Sayings of Hosea," and several others?

If Ezra reproduced all the other books of the Bible, why did he not reproduce these also? If they were originally written by thee, or at thy dictation, why were they not preserved from loss? but if lost, why were they not re-written by the same process as the others? Was it because of their unimportance or being of secondary consequence?

Is it not true that the books composing the Old Testament were not collected together in one volume or collection till two or three centuries before the beginning of the Christian era ?

Is it not true also that in the days of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samson, Samuel, David, Solomon, Jeroboam, Hezekiah, Josiah, and the other Kings of Israel and Judah, there was no Bible, no volume called thy revealed and written word ?

In those days was there any way to learn thy will upon any subject, save by going to men who styled themselves thy prophets and who claimed to be in special communication with thee and to be able to make known thy will and law ?

If for more than a thousand years thy people were able to get along very well without a Bible, and if for nearly another thousand years it existed only in detached parts in the hands of priests and others, could not the descendants of the same people, as well as those who adopted their theological opinions, have got along equally as well without a Bible for another thousand years or two ?

Is there anything in the nature of the Jewish Scriptures or sacred writings, or in the manner in which they were written and placed upon record, any more remarkable, any more divine, any more exalted, any more sublime, any more pure in character than the sacred writings of the

Hindoos, the Persians, the Chinese, the Egyptians, and others of the ancient nations?

Was it not common with many of the ancient nations, from three to five thousand years ago, to have their sacred writings, the same being regarded as the mind and will of their respective gods?

Is it not strictly true that several of these sacred writings possess a far greater antiquity than can be justly claimed for the Jewish Scriptures? and are there not older scriptures equal in every particular to what was afterwards gotten up in the small Jewish nation?

If it was thy original purpose to write or compile a Bible, is it not a little bit singular that thou sawest fit to wait till other nations than the Jews, which had other gods than thee, had preceded thee in the enterprise?

Is it not true that the theory of the cosmogony of the world—of the creation of the earth, of the sun, moon, and stars; of all varieties of vegetation, and of animals and man; of his temptation and fall; of the flood which deluged the earth—similar to what is now recorded in the Bible, existed in Chaldea long before thy people, the Jews, were taken there as captives?

Is not this fact abundantly confirmed by plates found by those indefatigable explorers, Smith and Rawlinson, at the site of ancient Nineveh?

Were they not able to decipher those characters? and did they not find there inscribed on those plates not only the story of the creation of the world, of the fall of man, and of the great flood which came upon the earth, but did they not also find the originals of the nursery tales such as "Jack the Giant Killer," "Jack and his Bean Stalk," "The House that Jack Built," and many other similar tales which for at least four thousand years have contributed to the pleasure and edification of little children?

Is it not true that those cuneiform inscriptions referred to were executed long before the Jewish Scriptures were written, yes, many centuries before a word was penned in the Hebrew language?

Is it not a well-ascertained fact that human language was written or transferred to plates, stones, monuments, etc.,

in the cuneiform inscriptions and in hieroglyphics long, long before any language having an alphabet was brought into use ?

As the Hebrew has an alphabet, is it not comparatively a modern language ? and was it not brought into use at a much later date than the employment of the cuneiform inscriptions of Assyria and Chaldea or the hieroglyphics of Egypt ?

This being the case, is it not fair to conclude that Ezra or Esdras, or whoever wrote the Bible account of the creation, of the fall of man, etc., got the whole thing in Chaldea when the Jews were in captivity there, and that the same was re-written in Hebrew after the return to Palestine, some five hundred years before the beginning of the Christian era ?

By looking all these things in the face and coming to the most natural conclusion that can be arrived at, is it strange that men should entertain the opinion that the foundation story of the Jewish Scriptures was borrowed from ancient pagan nations, and that instead of being written by thee or by thy dictation it was written by Ezra and his scribes or by some other equally officious persons or priests ?

And is it not a mistake that the civilized world of to-day attach so much more importance to the Jewish sacred writings than to those of other nations, which are far more ancient and far more voluminous and extensive ?

Great Jehovah : Has not the occupation of writing the sacred scriptures of the different nations of the world, as well as the descriptions of the various deities which men have believed in, been a part of the labors of the class of men known as the priesthood ?

Have they not in the prosecution of this work used their natural powers and abilities the same as though they had been engaged in other occupations ?

Did they employ, while pursuing this particular occupation, any powers or functions not entirely natural ? and was there anything supernatural in what they thus wrote ?

Is it not easy for enthusiastic, zealous, and imagina-

tive persons to become possessed of the idea that they are charged with a mission from a power above themselves, and that they are to convey the intelligence which they have received to their fellow-men ?

Has not the world in all ages and in all nations been amply supplied with this class of men who have assumed to be priests and prophets to their fellow-men ? and have they not considered it their duty and province to be guides and leaders to their fellows ?

Is it not one of the easiest things in the world for that class of men to become infatuated, and be carried away with an undue importance of their views, thoughts, and meditations ?

Is it not easy for persons of a dreamy, poetical, imaginative turn of mind to become imbued with the conviction that they have received light superior to those by whom they are surrounded ? and that they have been placed in communication with thee ? and that they are able to make known thy will and purposes ?

Like other avocations which attract the attention of human beings, is not this altogether natural and wholly independent of anything supernatural ?

Is it not absurd for men to imagine there is a force or existence that is supernatural ?

Does not the universe contain all the powers and principles that have an existence ?

Is it not the effects of ignorance and error that incite man to believe there is a domain or state of existence outside of or above the universe ?

Does not the universe contain all domains, all states, all stages and conditions of life and being that have an existence ?

Have not designing, ambitious men often made untruthful assertions with a view to misleading their fellow-beings as to the commission of leadership which they had received from thee ?

Have not those who—in the forty or fifty centuries that have last passed—have claimed to interpret the will of the gods, used much of design and misrepresentation in what they have done ? and have they not found a plenty of cred-

ulous, gullible people ready to swallow that which was claimed came from a divine source ?

Has it not been perfectly easy for this class of men to cry out to their dupes, "Thus saith the gods!" "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts?"

Is it not safe and proper to watch this class of persons, who claim to have received, in an unnatural way, information not equally accessible to all other classes?

As a rule, is it not vastly safer to take the results of human experience and observation than to take on trust what this designing class may endeavor to foist upon our attention and credulity?

Have not mankind in past ages made great mistakes in throwing away fact for fiction, certainty for uncertainty, and natural truth for supposed light from on high?

Has not a belief in a host of imaginary supernatural beings, whether deities, demons, fairies, sprites, gnomes, genii, or any other of that numerous class, been a detriment to man? and have they not kept him in the chains of ignorance, darkness, fear, and dread?

Would it not be better for man to have used his powers of investigation, observation, and reason, than to have taken without question all that the imaginative, designing class have been pleased to hand over to him?

When man has depended upon his own natural abilities and powers of observation as a means of acquiring knowledge, studying the laws of nature and the phenomena of the universe, has not the knowledge thus acquired been of far more practical benefit to him than all that prophets, priests, and so-called inspired writers have been able to impart to him?

Are not facts and realities always greatly to be preferred to imaginings, conjectures, and visionary speculations?

Have not the natural sciences of astronomy, geology, chemistry, biology, physiology, mechanics, etc., been of vastly more use to man in performing the journey of life and in making this world a habitable dwelling-place than all he has ever been told about gods, devils, ghosts, and witches?

Is there any better study for man while his dwelling-

p'lace is here in this world than the knowledge, the facts, and conclusions that pertain to this stage of existence and his relations thereto ?

Is not his knowledge of the after life—if there is one—with its wants and duties, altogether too vague and uncertain for him to make any accurate calculations as to what his condition and needs there will be, and how to meet them and make necessary preparations for them?

Is not present duty paramount in all cases to the duties of the past or the future? Can we better prepare for the future than by well performing our present duty according to our best knowledge and judgment?

When there is so much requiring our attention and best efforts here, is it not a waste of time and energy to be wasting our strength and opportunities by directing our attention to a world beyond the reach of our vision, and of which we can have no positive information?

Can we be engaged in any better employment than in making as much of a heaven of this world as is within our power by removing ignorance, superstition, and mental darkness, and increasing practical knowledge and useful information?

Is not the practice of love to man, whom we can always see around us, now and here, far better than the love of imaginary gods above the clouds, whom we can neither see nor comprehend?

Are not our duties far more to our fellow-beings, our friends and neighbors, and to ourselves, than to the unknown gods, whom no man has seen nor ever can see?

If there are gods ruling in ethereal space, are they not too far removed from us to be affected either for good or ill by anything within our power to perform?

Have we any more power over them than we have over the sun or any of the other heavenly bodies in their unchangeable courses and orbits?

If it is not in our power to harm them, is it any more in our power to do them the slightest benefit?

Hast thou, Jehovah, ever received the slightest injury or benefit from any act that feeble and diminutive man has been able to perform?

Is it not far better for man to attend to his own work here in this world and leave the gods to attend to theirs in the unseen and unknown world?

Can we not do vastly more good by attending to our own business here in this life than by attending to the business of the gods or any of their subordinates in another life?

Is it not altogether a mistake of the priests and mouth-pieces for thee that thou hast been made angry at the conduct of thy children on the earth—that thy anger has been excited and thy passions aroused to the point of doing them great harm or of sending them, by way of retaliation, to a place of cruel and eternal torture?

Have not all these tales about thy anger and vengeance, thy fierce judgments, thy disposition to punish without purpose or object thy weak and fallible creatures, done far more harm to the inhabitants of the earth than any possible good they have accomplished?

Have not these doctrines of vengeance and judgment been the basis and apology for the cruel wars and persecutions that the adherents of the various systems of religion—notably those who have claimed to believe in thee—have practiced, by which countless millions have been brought to premature and cruel death?

Is not devotion to the great family of humanity, with the purpose and object of improving the condition of those around us, by the performance of good deeds, and following out the better impulses of our natures, incomparably better than all the intolerant zeal and proscription that grow out of the worship of and belief in tyrants and rulers above the clouds? and is it not better to keep our minds on our duty here than for it to wander in the vacuity of interplanetary space?

Great Jehovah, let us once more approach the era when thy reputed Son came upon the earth to carry out the grand scheme which thou hadst devised to save a moiety of thy dear children, whose early progenitors had committed the great sin of eating an apple which thou hadst the kindness to place within their reach, and with whose beauties they were tempted. Is it not true that thy Son never wrote a

word relative to his advent into this world and of his career while here? Have we the slightest information of his writing a word upon any subject?

As his mission to the children of the apple-eaters was of such immense consequence, is it not most singular that the date of his entrance into the world should not have been correctly given by the different scribes or evangelists, whom thou didst employ to write the account for thee?

If in giving the genealogy of thy Son, who was also declared to be a son of David, is it not a little curious that both Matthew and Luke should utterly fail to show that he was in any sense a descendant of David?

As Joseph the carpenter is distinctly shown to have been no more the father of Jesus than was Pontius Pilate, is it not the height of absurdity for both Matthew and Luke to pretend to give the genealogy of Jesus, when after all they give only the pedigree of a man, not his father, and who bore no consanguineous relationship to him?

Besides falsely giving what was pretended to be the genealogy of Jesus, when it was of another person entirely, is it not decidedly strange that the two inspired evangelists should be utterly unable to agree as to the line and number of progenitors?

Does not Matthew state that there were twenty-seven generations inclusive, between David and Joseph, while Luke states it to be forty-two—a difference of over fifty per cent?

Is it not strange, too, that in giving the names of this line of descent from David down, there are only two names mentioned by Matthew that are given by Luke?

Can it be claimed, with any sense of propriety, that both of those inspired writers wrote the truth?

Is not truth always the same, and when two statements are made, and they are not only wholly unlike each other, but diametrically opposite, is it not clear that one at least must be false?

Is a falsehood any the less a falsehood because the person who wrote it is claimed to have been inspired by thee?

Is it not a very fair conclusion that when one or more persons set out to narrate a line of events, and in the laying down of the foundation upon which to erect their structure,

they tell most palpable falsehoods, their subsequent utterances should be taken with the utmost caution?

If a witness bears false testimony, a most important particular, are we not justified in doubting him upon any statements he afterward makes? If he begins with a falsehood, may we not fairly conclude that he will intersperse falsehoods all through his narrative?

If Matthew and Luke could succeed no better in showing that Jesus was a son of David, are we any more sure that they were uttering the truth when they undertook to make us believe that he was directly begotten by thee or thy counterpart—the Holy Ghost?

Is there not a marked discrepancy between the different accounts of the time of his birth? Does not Matthew state that he was born in Herod's time, while Luke assures us that it was in the time of Cyrenius, when Augustus Cæsar gave orders that all the people should be taxed?

Inasmuch as Cyrenius succeeded Archelaus, the son of Herod, is it not altogether impossible that Jesus could have been born in the time of both rulers?

As Josephus states that, on the night preceding the death of Herod, an eclipse of the moon occurred, cannot the time be definitely calculated back, showing that the eclipse occurred on the 4th of March four years before the birth of Jesus?

Does not this conclusively show that Matthew states what was positively untrue, and that he is not a credible authority in stating matters of fact?

In view of the fact that Jesus, the savior of all who can by any possibility be saved, and is the most important character that ever had an existence, is not the history of his life extremely defective when only one of the four who assumed to state the facts in his case should give a single item in his infancy, childhood, and manhood up to the age of thirty years?

Is it not proper that the world should know how so important a character passed his time in the days of his childhood and youth? Should we not be told what were his habits and pursuits, what engaged his attention, what were his opportunities, temptations, and failures, if any?

Is it not a very deficient history of a person to say nothing about his life and conduct until he "began to be about thirty years of age"?

Was not Prof. John Fiske eminently correct when he said that "the Jesus of dogma is the best known, and the Jesus of history is the least known, of all the eminent names in history"?

Among the various opinions as to the year in which Jesus was born, were there not, as Prof. Draper has declared, some thirty different opinions?

Regarding the month, also, was there not a great diversity of opinion?

While the Christian world usually believe that he was born on the 25th of December, did not Dr. Adam Clarke, in his Commentary, say, "The nativity of Jesus in December should be given up"? The Egyptians placed it in January; Wagenseil in February; Bochart in March; Clement in April; some in May; others in June and July; Wagenseil in August, as his second choice; Lightfoot in September, and so on through the entire twelve months?

It cannot be true, can it, that he was born in each and all of those months? or can it be set down for an ascertained fact that he was born in either of them?

Is there any reason why it should be claimed that he was born on the 25th day of December save the convenient fact that that was the anniversary of the celebrated Goddess Bruma, which the ancient Romans worshiped, and also other demi-gods whose births were celebrated on that day of the year?

Did not the myth of the birth of the son of God on the twenty-fifth day of December have its origin in the astronomical fact that on that day the sun of the solar system is born, or begins to arise from the night of sleep in which he has been indulging?

If it was of importance that each evangelist should state the remarkable announcement of the angel to the Virgin Mary of thy expected visit, how is it that Mark and John have not a word to say about it?

Was this an oversight, or was it of so little consequence that thou didst not think it worth while to mention it?

And if so, why didst thou deem it necessary for Matthew and Luke to say anything about it?

How was it that even Matthew and Luke could not state the circumstances alike—that Matthew said the appearance was made to Joseph, and Luke that it was made to Mary? Were both statements true? Were Joseph and Mary the same person?

How was it that the terrible slaughter of all the little children in the country by Herod was not even alluded to by either Mark, Luke, or John? Could they be correct historians and ignore such a notable event?

Is it not very singular, too, that when the very remarkable event of darkness coming over the land in day time, the sun being darkened for three hours, when there was an earthquake, when rocks were rent, the graves opened, and many who had long slept the sleep of death walked forth and again joined their former companions, and that nobody knew anything about it but Matthew?

If such a thing ever occurred, was it not among the most remarkable events that ever took place? And is it not extremely singular that neither Mark, Luke, nor John said a word about it, and that no contemporaneous historian ever heard of it or knew anything about it?

Instead of Matthew's story being the truth, is it not far more probable that he drew wholly upon his imagination and stated as a fact what never occurred?

Great Jehovah, are there not many discrepancies in the statements made by the four evangelists? Does not this fact apply as well to the reputed time of thy Son's birth, the place of his residence, the length of his mission, the events narrated of his career, the works he performed, and the time and manner of his death and resurrection?

Do not the first three evangelists say that Simon was the first disciple chosen, while, on the contrary, John says it was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter?

In the matter of his riding into Jerusalem upon an ass, does not Matthew say Jesus sent two disciples for an ass and its colt, while Mark and Luke speak of a colt only, and John of a young ass, but only one animal? Do not Mark and

Luke state that the colt was found by two of the disciples, while John represents that Jesus found it himself?

Is there not a similar contradiction about where the ointment was applied upon his person? Do not Matthew and Mark say that it was poured upon the head of thy Son, while Luke and John say distinctly that it was applied to his feet? Are the head and feet the same in the language of heaven?

In the account given of Jesus' casting out large numbers of devils, which passed into two thousand swine, causing them to rush into the sea and be destroyed, does not Matthew say they were cast out of two men, who were found crying among the tombs, while Mark insists that it was but one man? Are two and one precisely the same in the heavenly arithmetic?

Is there not a discrepancy in the different narratives as to what Judas said when he betrayed thy son? Does not Matthew have him to say, "Hail, Master," then kissing him, while Mark says he said, "Master, Master;" Luke stating that Judas kissed Jesus without saying anything, while John states the event entirely different, omitting both the speaking and the kissing on the part of Judas, but making Judas to fall backward on the ground?

Is not also the reply of Jesus on the occasion given very differently? *First*—"Friend, wherefore art thou come?" *Second*—"Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves, to take me?" *Third*—"Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" *Fourth*—"Whom seek ye? I am he. If, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way?" Is there not too great a discrepancy here for all to be true?

Is there not a slight misstatement as to where Jesus was taken to be tried? Does not one say it was to the high priest, two that it was to Caiphas, and one that it was to Annas?

Is there not a discrepancy about what was done, and what became of Judas with the noted thirty pieces of silver? Does not Matthew say Judas threw them down in the temple, and then went and hanged himself, while Mark, Luke, and John say nothing about the subject? Is

it not recorded in the first chapter of Acts that Judas bought a field with the money, whereupon he fell headlong and all his bowels gushed out? Ought we to believe any narratives inspired by thee which contradict each other so palpably?

Is not the reply made by Jesus to Pilate and the high priest very differently reported by the four evangelists? According to Matthew, did he not say, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of God and coming in the clouds of heaven"? Does not Mark say that Jesus answered not a word? According to Luke did he not merely say, "Thou sayest it," and according to John, nothing?

Do not the witnesses disagree as to the number of times the cock crew in connection with Peter's denial of Jesus? Does not Matthew say it was "once," Mark "twice," Luke "once," John "once"? As "once" has the majority, and is, therefore, more probably correct, what becomes of Mark's statement?

Is there not a similar disagreement as to the number of times Peter made the denial? Does not Mark say "once," while the three others insist it was "three"? If the three are correct, is the "one" positively incorrect?

Is there not also an unfortunate disagreement between the four witnesses in reference to what Jesus was struck with? Does not Matthew say it was the palms of their hands; Mark, on the head with a reed; Luke, that he was struck on the face, but what with not stated; and John, with the palms of their hands? Can Mark be correct, if the others state the truth?

Do they not also disagree as to the words of Pilate, according to Matthew, calling Jesus "Christ;" Mark, "The King of the Jews;" Luke, "What evil hath he done?" John, "The King of the Jews"? Is not Matthew the only one of the four that names the choice being granted between Jesus and Barabbas, or any other individual?

Is not John at variance with the other three when they say Simon the Syrian was compelled to bear the cross, while he says Jesus bore it himself?

Is not Luke similarly at fault as to the place where Jesus

was crucified? Does he not say it was Calvary, while the others say positively it was Golgotha, the place of the skulls?

Is there not a disagreement between Matthew and Mark as to the color of thy Son's robe? Does not one pronounce it "scarlet" and the other "purple"?

Does not Luke differ from Matthew and Mark as to the thieves reviling thy Son? Does Luke not say it was one of the thieves, while the others say it was both, and while John says nothing about it?

Is there not a chance for an error as to whether Jesus died of his own accord, or from the effects of the crucifixion? Does not Matthew say "they crucified him"? While the others state as emphatically that "he gave up the ghost"?

Is there not a wide difference in the statement of the four as to what was given thy Son to drink at the time of his crucifixion? Does not Matthew say it was "vinegar mingled with galls;" Mark, "wine mingled with myrrh;" Luke, "vinegar;" John, "vinegar and hyssop"?

Is there not a singular disagreement as to the words last spoken by thy Son as he passed from life? Does not Matthew make it "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani;" Mark, nearly the same; Luke, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. It is finished;" and John, "Woman, behold thy son; behold thy mother. I thirst; it is finished"?

Is there not a marked discrepancy between the four divine writers as to the hour at which Jesus was crucified? Do not Matthew and Luke agree that it was the "ninth hour"? Does not Mark assert that it was the "third hour"? while John, to split the difference evenly, says it was the "sixth hour"? Were not these writers defective in being unable to state the precise truth?

Is there not a disagreement as to the words inscribed upon the cross, one having it, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews;" another, "The King of the Jews;" another, "This is the King of the Jews;" and the last, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"?

Is there not a disagreement as to what the centurion called thy Son at the time of his death? Did not Matthew

and Mark agree that it was "The Son of God," while Luke has it, "Certainly this was a righteous man?"

Do not Mark and John widely disagree as to the manner in which Joseph begged the body of Jesus? Does not Mark say it was "boldly," while John says it was "secretly," for fear of the Jews?

Do the four all tell the exact truth as to who first visited the sepulchre with Mary? Matthew says it was "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary." Mark, that it was "Mary the mother of James and Salome;" Luke that it was "Joanna and Mary the mother of James, and the other woman," while John says it was "Mary Magdalene, who came alone." In a trial for murder or manslaughter could a prisoner be convicted upon such testimony?

Do they not also disagree as to how the stone was rolled away. Matthew saying an earthquake took place, when "an angel came and rolled it back for them;" Mark making them inquire, "Who shall roll away the stone? and they looked, and it was rolled away;" Luke saying, "They found the stone rolled away," and John, "The stone was taken away"?

Is not the statement about the number of the angels seen a little confused? Does not Matthew say it was "one angel;" Mark, that it was "a young man;" Luke, "two young men;" and John, "two angels"? How much weight would such kind of evidence have in a modern court of justice?

Do they agree any better as to the position in which the angel or angels were seen? Does not Matthew say he was "sitting on the stone at the door of the sepulchre;" Mark, that he was "in the sepulchre, on the right side;" Luke, that they were in the sepulchre, and "stood by us;" John, that they were inside, "one at the head and one at the feet of where the body had lain"?

Is there not also a marked disagreement as to whom thy Son first appeared to after his resurrection? Does Matthew not say "two women;" Mark, "one woman;" Luke, "two apostles;" John, "one woman," while 1 Corinthians, xv, 5-8, says it was "Cephas"?

Are we not liable to be misled as to whether Mary con-

fided the fact of the resurrection to other persons? Does not Matthew say, "She ran with fear and great joy to bring the disciples word"? Does not Mark say, "They trembled and were amazed; neither said they anything to any other man, for they were afraid"? Does not Luke say, "They told it to the eleven and all the rest"? while John makes Mary to say she had "seen the Lord and he had spoken to her"?

Great Jehovah, is there not a marked discrepancy in the statements in the New Testament as to the number that Jesus appeared to after his resurrection, and the number of occasions on which he appeared? Does not Matthew state that it was on two occasions—to the woman, and to the eleven in Galilee? Does not Mark state it was on three—to Mary Magdalene, to two disciples, and to the disciples at meat? Does not Luke say it was three times—to Cleopas and his companion, to Peter and to the eleven, and others? Does not John state it as four—to Mary Madalene, to the disciples without Thomas, to the disciples with Thomas, and the several on the Tiberias Lake? Does not Paul make the appearances amount to six—to Peter, to the twelve apostles, to more than five hundred, to James, to all the apostles, to Paul himself? Does any one of the inspired writers on this important subject agree with either of the others?

Do not similar disagreements exist as to when and how Jesus made his ascension?

Does not Matthew think so little of the event, if he knew anything about it, that he never even alluded to it?

Does not Mark narrate the wonderful affair in these few words: "So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God"? Is not that a very indefinite manner in which to describe one of the most remarkable events that ever took place in the world?

Does not Luke narrate it in a still different manner, and say thy Son "led his disciples out as far as to Bethany, when he lifted up his hands and blessed them, whereupon he was carried up into heaven"?

Does not John ignore the matter, and say nothing what-

ever about it, the same as though it never took place? Is it not equally as singular as in Matthew's case that he said nothing about the event? Had it even taken place, would not Matthew and John both have described it?

Does not the writer of Acts, in attempting to narrate the particulars of the occurrence, stating that Jesus was addressing his disciples upon the subject of not departing from Jerusalem; about the baptism of John and of the Holy Ghost, and of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, then say, "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight"?

Is it not, to say the least, most singular that such a remarkable event as that when the Son of God, who had been residing upon the earth in human form for more than thirty years, took his departure for heaven, the incident should be stated so differently by thy inspired writers, and that two of thy most important scribes should never allude to it at all?

Is it not fair to conclude that, had such an event ever occurred, and had Matthew and John known anything about it, they would, at least, have mentioned it? Is not the fact of their not alluding to the affair in the slightest degree sufficient grounds to cause people to think that no such occurrence ever took place?

As it is admitted by able Bible critics that the last twelve verses of the last chapter of Mark are spurious, and what is there said about the ascension is thrown aside, does it not leave the story resting on very insufficient grounds—the statement of Luke, supposed also to be the writer of the Acts, and who does not claim that he was present and saw the ascension?

Can it be strange that a regret should exist that if Jesus, while in the body, was absolutely taken up into the upper atmosphere, and thence to heaven, a more detailed, consistent, and satisfactory account of it was not given?

If doubts exist in the minds of men as to the authenticity of the narrative, can it by any means be strange?

If Matthew and John were authorized by thee to write up the life and doings of thy Son, did they not fail greatly

in their duty to thee, to themselves, and to the world by not paying the slightest attention to it?

Is there not a discrepancy also as to the time Jesus remained on the earth after his resurrection and before his ascension? According to one statement of Luke, was it not less than one day—"To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise"—while in the same chapter he says Jesus did not ascend till the third day after the crucifixion, while in Acts it says he was seen of his disciples for forty days? What are we to conclude of the reliability of a story that is thus told in three different ways by the same writer? Is not the only sensible course which can be pursued to discard it altogether?

Is there not also a slight discrepancy as to the time Jesus remained in the grave after his burial? Is not Jesus himself reported as saying, "For as Jonas was three days in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"? On the other hand, is it not stated that he was one day and two nights in the sepulchre? Is there a rule in celestial mathematics by which one day and two nights can be made three days and three nights?

As Jesus declared on several occasions that he would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, can it be justly claimed that remaining some thirty-six or forty hours in a sepulchre on the surface of the earth was carrying out his prediction? Can the sepulchre by any possibility be made to be the heart of the earth?

But if he did not remain in the sepulchre, but immediately took up his journey to the heart of the earth, or the center, after making a journey of four thousand miles in, and four thousand miles back again, through dense and highly heated matter, what portion of the day and two nights would he have on his hands to make up the three days and three nights which he was to pass in the heart of the earth?

Is there not an absurdity about the entire story impossible to be reconciled with reason and consistency? Is it not quite difficult to comprehend the possibility of his journeying four thousand miles and back again and remaining in the heart of the earth three days and three

nights, when he had only one day and two nights in which to accomplish it all ?

What kind of a biographer or historian is it who narrates the most trivial events, like noticing little children, strolling into the corn-fields on the Sabbath, or riding on an ass, visiting a fig tree, and then to pass in utter silence the momentous finale of an important life—the rising up bodily through the atmosphere into heaven? As we have seen that two of the biographers of thy Son say nothing of such an event having occurred, and as what is said by the third is admitted by the best judges to be spurious, as then the fourth is the only one who has anything to say about it, and he does not claim to have been present and a witness of the remarkable occurrence, are we not justified in entertaining the strongest doubts as to the reality of such an incident ever having taken place?

Is it really a benificent arrangement to cast souls into eternal fire for not being able to believe in such a mass of inconsistencies having been devised or dictated by them ?

Is there not a want of that harmony of statement which should be looked for in writers who were inspired by thee, in the account of the embalming of the body of Jesus after his crucifixion ?

Does not John relate how Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took possession of the body of Jesus, after the crucifixion, and embalmed him with about a hundred pounds in weight of myrrh and aloes?

While Mark seems to know nothing of this embalming, does he not relate how Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome, purchased spices, and on the first day of the week visited the sepulchre where Jesus was laid for the purpose of doing what Joseph and Nicodemus had already performed?

Does not Luke give a similar statement, while Matthew seems to have been entirely ignorant of both the embalming performed by Joseph and Nicodemus and the design to embalm on the part of the females mentioned by Mark?

Is it not singular after Jesus had on several occasions told his disciples of his coming trial and execution, and that on the third day he would rise again; that after his

death they seemed to have forgotten all about his promised resurrection in so much that, according to Mark, they questioned among themselves, "What this rising from the dead should mean?"

So far from the disciples looking for the resurrection of Jesus according to the promise he had made them, were they not unwilling to believe the statement of the women when they brought the intelligence to them that he had risen? Did their doubt and unbelief indicate that he had told them about his rising from the dead, and that they believed his words?

Does not Paul say, in giving his testimony as to the resurrection, "He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve, and after that he was seen by five hundred brethren at once"? Do either of the other narrators mention anything about five hundred of the brethren at once? Were there at that time so many as five hundred of the brethren?

How could Jesus have been seen by the "twelve" after his resurrection, when Judas had absented himself from their number, and had already killed himself?

When Paul said that Christ died for our sins, "according to the Scriptures," and that he rose again on the third day, "according to the Scriptures," had he any authority in the Scriptures for such a statement?

As the New Testament was not compiled for hundreds of years after that time, and as the Old Testament was all the Scriptures that were recognized, was there anything in the Scriptures that alluded in any way to the death and resurrection of Jesus?

In the mention which is made of Paul's vision, is not the same contradictory characteristic perceptible in the three statements which are given? According to the first account, is it not stated that when he saw a light from heaven and heard a voice, he fell to the earth, and the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man; while, in another account, is it not stated that "all fell to the earth"?

Does it not say, in one instance, that the men heard the voice, and in the next that they heard *not* the voice?

Are not such disagreements most unfortunate in a record

which we are called upon to believe is the truth from heaven? Would it not have been far better to have preserved the semblance, at least, of accuracy and consistency?

Really, is not the muddle connected with all these contradictory passages, as well as of many others not here alluded to, together with the efforts made by the clergy to explain them and harmonize them, quite enough to shake the confidence of every candid, inquiring mind?

Is the element of heavenly truth of such a character that it can be perverted, inconsistent, contradictory, and unreasonable, and still continue to be divine truth? Is not truth always the same, always harmonious, always consistent?

GREAT JEHOVAH: In connection with the fact that the books forming the New Testament are represented as being inspired by thee, may we not ask if there is such an amount of proof of the fact as to convince an earnest, investigating mind?

Are we to believe them to be of divine origin because the Church commands us to do so? Are we not entitled, as reasonable beings, to have some proof of so important a matter, and not be compelled to accept them because a privileged class of men who claim to hold commissions from thee demand that we should do so?

Is there any proof that any of the apostles, including Paul, or any of the early Fathers, including Justin Martyr, had any knowledge of the existence of the four gospels? If they had been written by those who are called the four evangelists during the generation in which thy Son is said to have lived, would not these parties have known something of their existence?

As the four gospels are merely narratives written in the style of those who write historical events, or who recite what they have heard, are there any grounds for us to conclude that the persons who wrote those books were necessarily inspired from heaven?

If Paul penned the epistles ascribed to him, and if he did so after the time when Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

wrote their narratives—if he was commissioned by thee to write what he did—would he not have known something of the existence of those four great books, and would he not have been familiar with their history and teachings?

During his whole career did Paul have any knowledge of the four gospels? Did he ever refer to them, or enjoin it upon his followers to read them or to believe in them?

In the instructions which he gave in his epistles, did he, even in one instance, cite or quote any of the moral precepts of Jesus, or did he allude to any of the events of his life while on earth?

Did Paul at any time call attention to any of the miracles that were claimed to have been performed by thy Son, or did he teach that salvation in any way depended upon believing them?

Is it not a reasonable conclusion that the four narratives now called the four gospels—but which were not called *gospels* till a long time after they were written—were entirely unknown to Paul, and that he knew nothing, historically or personally, of the begetting, birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of thine only Son?

Did Paul have any intimacy or close fellowship with any of the eleven apostles? and, so far as he is concerned, would it not be easy to come to the conclusion that they were myths?

In view of all the facts of the case, are not the grounds very slight for accepting the existence of the twelve apostles, and that the four gospels were written at the time thy Son was on the earth, or immediately after?

If “preaching the gospel,” in the days of the apostles, meant to recite the story of his birth, life, and death, with a repetition of his moral precepts, is it not singular that what are now called the four gospels, and are deemed of so much importance, should have been wholly unknown by the apostles and saints and fathers for a century and a half after thy Son was born?

In the time when the apostles and fathers were living, and when they committed their narratives to writing on parchment, was it considered that these writings were anything more than human efforts, and was it regarded in any

instance in their time that they were revelations from heaven? Was not that character attributed to them a long time after they were written, in succeeding generations, and by an entirely different class of persons?

Is it not an unfortunate circumstance connected with Christian theology that the plan of the salvation of the world should have for its foundation the baseless fabric of a dream, which some person is *said* to have dreamed, as given in the story of Matthew?

Were dreams in the first Christian century really any more of divine production than in the present century? Are not dreams a perfectly natural phenomena, that occur to men, women, and children alike, as well as to animals?

If some dreams are divine and sent from thee, would it not have been proper that some criterion or rule should be given whereby it could be decided which dreams were divine and which merely human?

Let us ask again, is not a dream of an obscure individual for which we only have the assertion of a second party—who was not present when the dream was dreamed, and did not even know the person who did the dreaming, and did not write his story till over a hundred years after the dream took place—an extremely slender foundation upon which to build up a plan and system for saving a world of almost countless millions of human beings?

Is it not most unfortunate for those who need salvation so badly, that there is so little proof of what they are commanded to believe, and that so much is left to faith?

Is it not a little unreasonable that men are required to believe without proof, and when their own eternal salvation depends upon it?

As in the present age of the world, when a historian or narrator gives marvelous statements as facts, and he tells how he knows what he states as truth to be so, whether he saw it himself or not, and whether he obtained the facts from responsible, reliable sources, would not such assurance have been as essential in olden times?

When a narrator states most remarkable occurrences, and wishes his readers to accept them as truths, should he not be clear in giving the sources of his information?

When Matthew states that the Devil carried thy Son from the wilderness to the top of a high mountain, and also to the pinnacle of the temple, and shewed him the kingdoms on all sides of the globe, does he state that he was present and saw it, or does he give the least clue as to how he knew anything about it? Did the Devil tell Matthew about the little excursion, or did thy Son impart the information to him? Unless we have the authority of one or the other to rest upon, are we obliged to accept the statement as fact?

When he states that at the time of the crucifixion, when the sun was darkened, when earthquakes took place, when the graves were opened, and the dead carcasses were restored to life and walked forth and joined their former companions, does he give any proof that such things ever occurred? Does he even say that he saw it, or does any other historian or story-teller confirm his statement? Did anybody else know anything about such events taking place?

Is there not, in fact, as much ground for the world to believe the writers of epic poems, romances, and fairy tales, who give us their remarkable stories, as there is to believe those who tell us about a carpenter's dream having so much meaning in it, about the Devil carrying the Son of God around where he pleased, and of the dead getting up and walking alive out of their graves?

What means had the writers of the gospels for knowing what Pilate's wife had dreamed? Is it of much consequence to the world what anybody has dreamed at any time?

Are not a full stomach and an undigested supper great incentives to strange and extravagant dreams? Is not, in fact, a dream the most unreliable and baseless of everything connected with the human race?

While the first three gospels have in many respects quite a sameness in style and the events narrated, seeming to have been derived from a common source, is not the fourth gospel of an entirely different character?

Does not John relate of Jesus a different set of miracles, a different and greater assortment of parables, and a differ-

ent set of incidents? And is not the whole given in language unlike the others?

Does not John have it that Jesus visited Jerusalem four different times, which the others say nothing about?

How is it that John says nothing about the remarkable feats of Jesus, casting out devils from human beings—on one occasion as high as two thousand from a single individual?

How is it that the first great miracle which John narrates as being performed by Jesus, the changing of water into wine at a wedding, is not mentioned by either of the other three? Was it because they were temperance advocates and deemed it wrong to prepare more wine for people who were already drunk?

How is it that John says he cured the son of a courtier or captain of Capernaum of a dangerous illness, and the others said nothing about it?

How is it that John narrates the curing by Jesus of a cripple of thirty-eight years standing and the others have nothing to say upon the subject?

How is it that the great miracle of giving sight to a blind man forty years of age, who had been blind from his birth, should have been narrated by John, and by none of the others?

How is it that the most remarkable of all his miracles—the one said to have been performed in or near Jerusalem, and the one most calculated to attract attention of any of the great works he performed—should have been described by John, and not be noticed by any of the other evangelists?

If the act of raising Lazarus from the dead after he had been four days in the sepulchre, and after decomposition had set in, was really performed by him, must not Matthew, Mark, or Luke have known something of it? If they knew it, and kept silent upon the subject, were they not positively derelict in their duty, and can they be regarded as reliable historians?

Does not the very fact that they said nothing about this remarkable event go very far to show that it never took place?

Is it not true that John's gospel was written long after the others—after the apostles were all dead, after Jerusalem had been destroyed, after all the learned schools of Palestine had been broken up, after all the witnesses had disappeared, and after nearly all the population had been sold into slavery by the bitter cruelty of the Romans?

Was it not written in a foreign country and in a foreign language, and was it not simply a gross imposition to palm it off as a genuine account of thy Son's career on the earth and as written by his beloved disciple, John?

But if it was really written by John, the son of Zebedee, and he related marvelous events nearly one hundred years after they transpired, was it not his obvious duty to give not only his own name as the writer, but all the confirmatory proof that would bear upon the matter?

Great Jehovah: when all the authorities teaching what are called the four gospels are examined, are we not compelled to decide that they were not written by the persons by whom they are claimed to have been written and that they were not written at the time when it is claimed they were written?

Is it not most true that there is no record that the earliest Fathers of the Christian Church made any mention of those gospels till the latter part of the second century?

Is there any record in existence to show that Polycarp, one of the first bishops in the Christian Church (and who, by the bye, there are great reasons for believing was only a mythical character) ever made the slightest mention of either of the four gospels?

Is there the first particle of proof that Ignatius (another of the early Fathers and first bishops, who wrote epistles himself, and who is also regarded as mythical) once alluded to the writings of either Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John?

Is there any ground whatever for claiming that Justin Martyr, a prominent early Father and Christian writer, who gave up his life in the latter part of the second century, ever once spoke of either of the four gospels?

Can there be found any record to show that Hegesippus, a contemporary of Justin Martyr, who wrote extensively

in the second century, made the least mention of the writings of the four evangelists?

Although the latter writer frequently spoke of writings called the "Memoirs of the Apostles," which have principally passed out of existence, is it not singular if the writings of Matthew and his three fabulous compeers were at that time in existence that he did not mention them at all?

Is it not true that the early Fathers here mentioned deemed the traditions or unwritten history of their predecessors of far more consequence than anything that was written? and did they not allude to and quote the former far more than the latter?

Were not Papias of Hierapolis and Irenæus the first of the Christian Fathers who were known to have mentioned either of the four gospels—the first mentioning them very slightly, and the second more fully?

Is it not quite as probable that they were devised by the last two characters named or by some other inventive individual or individuals?

If, then, we repeat, neither Paul nor the apostles, nor the early Fathers and bishops, knew anything about the existence of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John till the latter part of the second century, is there not the strongest ground in the world for the belief that they had not an existence much prior to that time, and that they were not written by the parties claimed?

Is there not, then, proof that the Apocryphal New Testament is as old and genuine as the canonical New Testament?

Is there not a probability that the gospel according to Barnabas is as true and as much the work of divine inspiration as that according to St. Matthew?

Is not the Gospel of Nicodemus as reliable and as worthy of confidence as the Gospel of Luke?

Is not the book called the Protevangelion as sensible and as true as the insane *melange* called the book of Revelations?

Is not the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians nearly equal in truth and beauty to the Epistle of Paul to the same people?

Are not the writings ascribed to Hermas, which were

approvingly alluded to and quoted by Irenæus and Origen and others of the early Fathers, entitled to as favorable consideration, and do they not possess as much inherent evidence of being dictated by thee, as do the writings of the evangelists, the Acts, etc.?

Are not other books, which have been declared apocryphal, as ancient, as well written, as replete with divine unction; did they not receive recognition and approval from the first Fathers and bishops as early and as emphatic as did the other gospels and epistles which centuries afterwards by contentious and angry councils were declared to be "canonical," thy Holy Word?

In view of the fact that in the second century there were a great number of gospels and epistles by unknown writers pertaining to the advent of thy Son on the earth, and that these stood about equal in point of veracity, beauty, and authority, the ease with which they could have been gotten up by any person of fair, average ability, the crudities, imperfections, and contradictions with which they all abounded, the uncertainty of authorship that rested upon nearly all alike, the great diversity of copies and transcripts that existed, the additions and abstractions that have been made on this hand and on that, the disputations, quarrels, and contentions that were so often held over them, the uncertain means that existed to enable the councils or any other persons to decide which were genuine and written or dictated by thee, or whether any of them possessed those qualities, are we not left in great doubt whether subsequent councils of angry bishops and priests made the right selection, when the canon was finally decided upon, whether the right manuscripts were selected and the wrong ones rejected, and whether any of them really possessed the qualifications of having proceeded from thy hand or of having been dictated or inspired by thy mind?

Have not the quarrels and contentions which have taken place over those competing and uncertain manuscripts been productive of as much evil as all the good amounts to that has grown out of thy word?

Has not the doubt and uncertainty which the world has

labored under in respect to these writings, and which exist to-day, and the total lack of proof that any of them are superior to human production, entirely counterbalanced the imaginary benefits that have accrued from them?

Is it not most true that in the period of the world when these gospels and epistles were written there was a great prevalence of ignorance and superstition and a blind belief in supernatural guidance? Were not miracles and unnatural phenomena implicitly believed in, and did not this quality of ignorant belief grow out of the great want of scientific and demonstrative knowledge which prevailed in the world at that time?

Was not every operation of nature at that period looked upon as inexplicable and mysterious? and was not thy direct interposition believed to take place on nearly all occasions?

When this kind of belief prevailed, is it at all strange that marvels, myths, and miracles should be the order of the day, and that many should claim to speak in thy name and to write the words dictated by thee?

Are not candid and intelligent people of the present time fully justified in looking with great care and suspicion upon the recitals of those ancient miracles and the claims set up that certain writings were penned by thy special aid and dictation?

Is it at all true that thou wert more engaged eighteen hundred or twenty-five hundred years ago in having ignorant and superstitious men employed to write thy mind and will, and to impart truth and knowledge to the world, than thou art at the present day?

Is it not far more sensible and correct to conclude that those writings of the first three centuries of the Christian era were mere legends and unauthorized narratives, and many of them absolute forgeries and impositions, than that the Architect of the universe devoted a moment of his time to devising them, dictating them, or sending them forth to the world as the will of heaven?

In fact, is there anything in the style, manner, matter, grandeur, intellectual ability, harmony, and reliability of those legends and recitals that warrants us in regarding

them as superior to human production, and that thou necessarily must have gotten them up, or at least have given thy assistance in that direction?

When we find a piece of writing, or any other piece of workmanship which a human being of ordinary ability could have produced, are we justified in concluding that it is superhuman and must have been the work of a God?

Are not the views taken by modern writers and thinkers, that the Bible is simply made up of the writings of an average class of men for the times in which they lived, who gathered up the legends and traditions that were in existence, and transmitted them to parchment without any aid or dictation outside of themselves, far more consistent and truthful than the absurd claim that it was thou who wrote those narratives or employed certain obscure and unknown men to write them for thee?

Are we not quite correct in deciding that every piece of writing we see is the work of some human being, until we find something absolutely beyond the power of man to produce? So long as we find nothing that man could not easily write, shall we say God must have written this?

Is it not more correct to look for thy will and power in the realm of nature, which is decidedly above the power of man to produce or imitate, than to pore over any musty manuscripts and transcripts that almost any monk or priest could have written?

In the matter of sacred writings and sacred scriptures, has not the Christian world been greatly led astray, and has it not submitted to a gross system of assurance and imposition? Has not much been passed off as superhuman and as emanating from the divine mind which was solely the work of human minds, and a very ordinary class of minds at that?

Great Jehovah: Permit us to ask thee a few questions in reference to miracles.

Are not miracles performed only by setting aside the laws of the universe, and wholly in opposition to the natural course of things, and in opposition to all the experience and observations of men?

If thou didst create the universe and didst establish all the laws by which it moves and acts, are not those laws essentially and wholly thine own? and dost thou at any time show so little respect for thine own work as to supersede it and set it aside?

Hast thou in reality at any time found the laws of the universe to be wrong, and that they ought to be superseded? and dost thou regard it as an honor or glory to thyself to declare the laws of thine own establishing to be at fault to the extent that even for a short time they ought to be set aside?

Dost thou really think after thou hadst established the grand and glorious universe that thou didst honor to thyself by allowing its laws to be set aside at the notion or whim of any individual, and some unnatural operation to be performed?

Have not the claims of miracles been the chief foundation upon which the religion of thy son was builded, and the principal reason given why it should be accepted by the world of mankind?

Are not his miraculous conception, the claims of his giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the power of walking to cripples, health to the diseased, life to those who had died, his feeding thousands of people with five loaves and two fishes, his changing water into wine, his casting out devils, his own resurrection from the grave, and, finally, his remarkable ascension into heaven, the reasons given why he should be believed in as thy Son, and that he was sent by thee into the world to bear away, by his death, the sins of the world—or, rather, a very small percentage of them?

The same with the Jews; was not the claim that wonderful miracles were said to have been performed among them the principle reason given why they were thy chosen people and why thou dwelledest with them more especially than with any others of the inhabitants of the earth?

Is it not also true that nearly all the other great systems of religion that have been established in the world have set up the same claims of wonderful miracles? In the primitive days of man's ignorance was not this miracle business

crowded upon the general attention far more than in the present age of the world ?

Was not Buddhism established by miracles of the most marvelous kind ? Was not Buddha said to have performed astonishing miracles himself ? and did not his disciples also make the same profession as to themselves ?

Did not certain Tirthyas, or heretical teachers, have the audacity to challenge Buddha to contend with them in the working of miracles, the same as the magicians of Egypt were said to have challenged Moses when the frogs, lice, and locusts were produced in such astonishing abundance ?

Does not Brahmanism also abound with similar wonderful classes of miracles ? Is it not stated in the sacred writings of that religion that in a contest between Nagardjuna and a Brahmin, that the latter produced a magical pond, in the middle of which grew a lotus tree with a thousand leaves, but that Nagardjuna produced a magical elephant which destroyed the magical pond ?

Do not the Mongols record some very wonderful performances on the part of a lama or priest named Bogda, who, when some messengers were sent to meet him, raised his hand in a threatening manner towards a river, when the waters turned and ran up hill instead of down as before ? Did not that miracle almost throw into the shade the one thou performedst when the Red Sea opened and thy children passed over on dry ground ?

Was it not somewhat derogatory to thine own power to allow the magicians of Egypt to so nearly equal the performances of Moses and thyself as to perform nearly all the miracles which thy servant, with thy aid, was able to accomplish ?

Does not the Grecian mythology abound in miracles that in marvelousness and impossibility equal those to be found in thy own volume ?

Was it not claimed that the daughters of the high priest Anius were able to change what they pleased into corn, wine, and oil ?

Was it not claimed that Athalide, the daughter of Mercury was revived from the dead several times ?

Is it not written that Esculapius resuscitated Hyppolytus ?
Did not Hercules rescue Alcestis from the hand of death ?

Was it not held that Heres returned to this world after passing fifteen days in hell ?

Were not Romulus and Remus claimed to be the offspring of a god and a v^estal virgin ?

Were not Mars, Argus, Vulcan, and others, claimed to have been born of the goddess Juno, and did not Minerva, the goddess of science spring full grown from the brain of Jupiter, and without any mother ? Did she not cause a fountain of oil to spring forth from a rock as a recompense for a temple that had been dedicated to her ?

Was it not stated that the Palladium descended from heaven on the city of ancient Troy ?

Was not the hair of Berenice changed into a constellation, and the cot of Baucis and Philemon into a superb temple ?

Was it not believed of Orpheus that his head delivered oracles after his death ?

Was it not written that the walls of Thebes spontaneously constructed themselves to the sound of a flute in the presence of the Greeks ?

Were not the cures effected in the temple of Esculapius reported to be absolutely innumerable ? And are not monuments still in existence containing the very names of the persons who were eye witnesses to these miracles ?

Is there hardly a single one of the ancient nations in which the most incredible prodigies and miracles were not said to have been performed ?

Is it really any more wonderful that these should be true than those narrated in the book of which thou art claimed to be the author ?

Is there not truly a great similarity between the older miracles said to have been performed by the pagans and those contained in thy revealed word ?

Were not the miracles quoted, much older, or was it not claimed that they were performed hundreds of years before those said to have been performed by Jesus ?

Was it not reported of Apollonius of Tyana, that he performed the most incredible miracles during his life time, which was not far from the time thy son is said to have

lived? Did he not heal the sick, give sight to the blind, and even raise a person from the dead, or at least is it not so reported of him, and are not the accounts as credible as those of thy son?

Have we not really as much grounds to accept the statements of Philostratus in what he says about that remarkable character, Apollonius as what the evangelists say of Jesus?

Was not Philostratus a man of intelligence, eloquence, and respectability? Was he not the secretary of the empress Julia, wife of the emperor Severus, and was he not requested by the empress to write the life and wonderful deeds of Apollonius? Can as much be said of the character, talents, and reliability of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, or of the parties who wrote in their name?

Must not Apollonius have been a character of no little consequence, when an empress deemed his life and deeds of so much consequence that she commissioned her secretary to write an account of his life?

On the other hand, were not the associates of thy son ignorant fishermen who knew little relatively of the ability of men, their powers and capacities?

If, then, the miracles of Apollonius are to be decided as not having been produced by divine power, and not worthy of our reverence, have we any better grounds for according a higher character to those performed by thy son?

Did not the Christian Church abound in pretended miracles for hundreds of years, and do not the priests of that Church still pretend that miracles are performed among them? Does not the image of the Virgin still shed tears on stated occasions, and does not the blood of Jesus, preserved in a vial, still liquify on certain sainted days? Do not the relics of the saints, so carefully preserved, continue to perform astonishing miracles of character and kind too numerous to relate?

Did not the Christians of the early centuries abound in pretended miracles? Was it not strongly claimed that when St. Polycarp was condemned to be burned, and that when he was actually in the midst of the flames, a voice was heard by those who stood around, saying, "Courage Polycarp, be strong and show yourself a man," and at that

very instant the flames quitted his body, and formed a pavilion of fire over his head, and from the midst of the pile flew out a dove ?

Did not the founder of the Mussulman religion claim that for his special benefit he was transported up into the seventh heaven upon his celebrated horse Alborak, and that the journey was performed in a marvelously short space of time ?

Do not the Mormons hold on to the same idea in regard to miracles when they declare that an angel brought certain metal plates to their leader, Joseph Smith, upon which plates were engraved in mysterious characters the material of which their Bible is composed ?

Are not all the miraculous events narrated by those several parties of the same incredible and absurd character? and do they not all deserve to be treated in the same searching and doubting manner?

May we ask thee, in all seriousness, if there was ever really any such a thing as a miracle performed ?

Is it really true that, at the command of a man of only ordinary character, the motion of the heavenly bodies was arrested, and that the sun ceased to move for the better part of a day? Is it not far more probable—yes, a thousand times more probable—that that story was related by some person who knew nothing, and cared nothing about the truthfulness or untruthfulness of the extravagant tale than that such an event ever took place?

Is not the story of thirty thousand feet of water falling upon the surface of the earth within forty days, by which the waters covering the globe were raised to the tops of the highest mountains, of such an extravagant character that no sensible person in this age of the world ought to give credence to it for a moment?

Wilt thou inform us where such an immense quantity of water could come from, where it could have been stored before that event, and where it went to again when it disappeared from the earth ?

Is not the account of the pairs and sevens of all animated creatures, suited to all zones, and possessed of very different habits and tastes, fed on different food, and requiring differ-

ent treatment in every particular, being shut up together for more than a year, of the same incredible character—which no man in his sober senses can intelligently believe ?

Are not the stories of a man being taken up into the upper atmosphere where heaven is supposed to be loca'ed, as was the case with Elijah and Jesus, of such an impossible character as to make them wholly unbelievable ?

Not to enumerate all the strange recitals given in the Bible, and which in the light of nature's laws and style of performing her operations, are unworthy of belief, is it not far more rational to conclude that they are the exaggerations of deluded minds, or the inventions of designing, cunning persons, who give them circulation for a specific purpose, than that they were really the work of thy hands, and that thou supersededst thy own laws for the purpose of performing them.

As general intelligence increases in the world, and the myths and fables of the ancient ages of ignorance are giving way, is it not decidedly sensible for men to discontinue the belief in asserted miracles ?

In looking over the vast number of miracles that are said to have been performed in the world, is it not easily to be perceived that after all the force that must have been required in their performance, they have amounted to but little after all, and have been but very little permanent use to mankind ?

What a power it must have taken to arrest the sun in its daily course, or rather the earth in its diurnal revolutions; did any lasting good come from it to the world at large ? Would it not have been vastly more utilitarian to have made another sun to have performed a daily journey round the earth from north to south, thus giving light and warmth to the frigid zones around the north and south poles, and thus making those immense desolate regions of almost eternal frost happy dwelling-places for man and animals ?

It was doubtless an able feat to make such a multitude of frogs, lice, fleas, and locusts as Moses and the Egyptian magicians turned out, but was there any special good gained to anybody by all that waste of power ? Would it not been better to have caused the trees of the forest to bear beauti-

ful flowers, and luscious health-giving fruits, the eating of which will drive disease and wretchedness forever away from the habitations of men ?

Samson is said to have performed the miracle of killing a lion with his own hands, and tying together the tails of foxes, with a firebrand attached, by which expedient a certain number of cornfields were burned; would it not have been far more useful to have caused books imparting useful knowledge to mankind to have grown on the shrubs and bushes all over the land ?

While it was wonderful how Elijah and Jesus could go up into space above the earth in a chariot of fire, or by a whirlwind, if it was necessary for them to go in that direction, could they not just as well have gone in a balloon as men do nowadays, had they understood that mode of travelling, but would it not have been more useful to the world to have fine loaves of good bread to appear fresh every morning on all the oak and maple trees in the world ?

Thy son is said to have converted water into wine, but was that of any special benefit to anybody ? Would it not have shown a far greater munificence of goodness to the human race to have permanently converted the Jordan, the Ganges, the Volga, the Rhine, the Seine, the Thames, the Mississippi, the Ohio, the Columbia, the Hudson, and the Potomac rivers with several of the large lakes of the world into sweet, fresh milk, bearing a fine rich cream, the free use of which could never have caused harm ?

While it was a very remarkable exploit on the part of Elijah, Elisha, Joshua, and all the others who are claimed to have brought the dead to life, was there any very great amount of good produced by the feat ? Were there not people enough in the world without them, and did they not have to die again anyway ? Would it not have been far better to teach the living how to always be able to obtain a sufficient supply of nutritious food, how to be able in all cases to avoid sickness and disease, and how to be usefully employed, and how to be happy under all circumstances ?

While it showed remarkable power to open the eyes of the blind, and to cause the cripples to walk and dance, would it not have done much more permanent good to the

world to have taken such measures as to cause blindness, deafness, lameness, and helplessness to be forever impossible among mankind ?

While miracle power was thus being worked in the extensive way in which the Bible narrates, is it not to be regretted that the results were mainly of so useless a character, and that the good that was produced was so transient in its nature, and that so few were benefited by it ? Would not far greater divine goodness and love have been exemplified by taking such measures as would have worked out happiness to the sons and daughters of men and have driven sorrow, suffering, wretchedness, and trouble from the face of the earth ?

Is it not far more conducive to the mental well-being of the race to look to the laws of the universe for all the events that transpire than to be expecting or easily believing that some supernatural power is going to set aside the unfailing laws of the universe for the sake of introducing some useless, untoward result ?

Has there ever taken place which was not directly the result of natural causes ? and are not the powers and forces of the universe sufficient for every needful event, and to perform everything that has been performed or can be produced ?

Is there not a marked absurdity in saying that everything is possible with thee ? Art thou not governed by laws and circumstances the same as everything else that has an existence ?

Canst thou make two mountains without a valley between ? Canst thou make a rod just three feet long without two ends ? Canst thou make a ten year old boy in fifteen minutes ? Canst thou cause twice five and three times five to make the same product ? Canst thou be false to the principles of truth and justice ? Canst thou make something of nothing ? Canst thou operate against thyself and act independently of thyself ?

Canst thou not do all these and more of the same character with the same facility as thou canst do anything in opposition to the laws of the universe, which are really thy own laws ?

Great Jehovah : We hear much from those who claim to speak in thy name about the supreme excellence and morality of the teachings of Jesus when he was upon the earth. Wilt thou allow us to candidly examine the matter for a few moments ?

Is it not true that Menu, Christna, Buddha, Confucius, Mencius, Thales, Orpheus, Solon, Bias, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Epicurus, Zeno, Aristotle, Hillel, Cæro, Seneca, Epictitus, Antoninus, Marcus Aurelius, and many others of the ancient sages and philosophers, taught many excellent morals, much of which was not inferior to those taught by thy Son ? and were they not equally worthy of credit with him for the good things they did say ?

If they were equally as pure and elevated in their morals, and aimed to benefit the world of mankind by their teachings, were they not equally as divine or god-like in their work as was Jesus of Galilee ?

Were all his inculcations and moral teachings really as perfect and as free from fault as theologians are in the habit of claiming ? Is it not the veneration growing out of the belief that he was the Son of God that induces people to regard his reputed utterances as being better than was ever spoken before or since ?

When what are called his beatitudes, or the better portions of his Sermon on the Mount, are examined critically as human productions are usually examined, will they not be found to be not without fault or defect ?

Were not many of the appeals made to the selfish propensities and prejudices of his hearers, and did he take, in those utterances, the high moral ground which it might be supposed a God should occupy ?

Can it not be seen that his incentive to virtue was not the love of virtue itself in the present time—now—but the reward or recompense to be accorded to meritorious deeds in another world and at some time in the future ?

Were not those who were persecuted for his sake consoled, not on the ground that they had done their duty, and from the satisfaction that ought to arise in the mind from consciousness of having performed kindness and fidelity to

a friend, but wholly upon the ground of a great reward to be paid them in the future world ?

Is it really true that, in the sight of God and all good men, pay at some distant time in the future is as strong and as pure an incentive to virtue and self-denial as is an innate love of goodness and virtue itself, which should actuate every intelligent being ? Is not the love of goodness a higher incentive to good deeds than either the hope of a reward or of the escape of punishment ?

Do not crowns of pearls and streets of gold, as incentives to a virtuous life, fall far below the higher inherent love of virtue itself, and for its own sake ?

Is it not to some extent a craven who will do good deeds only because he expects to be paid for it, or because some person he looks up to as a superior being tells him to do so, or because he is afraid if he does not perform the deeds he will be cast into a roasting and perpetual fire ? Dost thou not esteem that soul as higher and grander that performs good deeds all through life from the love he bears to virtue, and because he would rather do good deeds than evil deeds ?

Was not Juvenal about right when he said :

"Bad men hate sin through fear of punishment ;
Good men hate sin from very love of virtue,"?

Was the injunction which Jesus gave his hearers : "Compromise with thy legal opponent quickly, lest he persecute thee and get thee cast into prison," the highest and noblest motive a man can be inspired with ? and did it require a God to give such advice as that ? Could not a third-rate lawyer give advice as sound and as elevated as that ?

If thy questioner has a vile enemy who threatens arrest and imprisonment, and who is visiting the same almost daily upon others, shall thy questioner be governed by the fear of that enemy and of the evil he may be able, with the aid of wicked men, to do unto him ? Is it not far better, rather, that thy questioner be moved and actuated by the higher impulses of love and devotion to duty and to virtue ?

Was the advice to cut off a limb or to pluck out an eye

for some slight offense, a mark of superior and godly wisdom? Because a man injures his eye or accidentally gets dirt into it, shall he pluck it out and cast it away?

If he lames his arm or a boil comes upon it, shall he cut it off, or employ another to cut it off for him? Would a sensible physician give such advice as that? Would it not be a far more sensible course to remove the cause of offense and to restore the eye or the arm to health and usefulness again? Is a man of much use in this life or anywhere else with his eyes plucked out and his arms cut off?

Was not the threat of hell-fire, which the person was to be cast into in such cases if the eye was not plucked out or the arm not cut off, rather below the dignity of a God of love and mercy?

In the prohibition which Jesus made against swearing, did he either define the crime or give in explanation any good reason why swearing should not be indulged in? Would not a perfect teacher do both?

Is not the command "Be perfect, even as God is perfect," requiring more of human beings than they are capable of performing? Is it a mark of wisdom or justice in a parent or teacher to require more of a child than it is capable of performing? Is it, in any sense of the word, great or good to command an impossibility?

Was not the command to do alms in secret that God might reward openly again appealing to the same selfish, mercenary nature in man, already alluded to?

Was not the precept "Judge not lest ye be judged" of the same narrow, ignoble character?

Was not the injunction to forgive trespasses in order to secure forgiveness in return an appeal of the same description? Would it not have been grander to have inculcated the noble trait to forgive others, and do good to others, whether the same treatment was received in return or not?

Is it strictly in the line of truth to say that a lustful look towards a woman is just as criminal as to commit adultery with her?

If twenty men should look admiringly upon a lovely woman, and but one of the number should go so far as to

absolutely commit adultery with her, would they all be equally guilty?

Is it as criminal for a hungry child to look wishfully at a loaf of bread in a baker's window as to break through and steal it?

Is not the advice, if we are smitten on one cheek, to turn the other to be smitten also, simply absurd? Can any good come to a man to turn his second cheek to be smitten? Would it not be wiser for him to look up some better business and give his immediate attention to it?

Is it not equally absurd to encourage the thief who steals a coat by giving him a cloak as a remuneration for his enterprise? If that principle were carried out, would it not place all the property in the world in the possession of the thieves and scoundrels, and must it not forever be changing hands and be given to the new thieves that may constantly arise?

Is it the most sensible advice that can be given to mankind to take no thought for the morrow and to make no provision for the future? If all men acted upon that principle, would not all enterprise be destroyed and the world soon reduced to a state of mendicancy, ignorance, and barbarism?

Is it the highest pattern that men have to look to, in preparing for the frosts of winter and the helplessness and decrepitude of old age, to do as the birds and lilies do, to toil not nor spin?

Rather than to spend our days in idleness, neither sowing, cultivating, nor reaping, is it not better to be industrious, and sow the seeds in the spring, on well-prepared soil, of the grains that constitute the food of man, and to work industriously through the season in caring for the same and in harvesting it in barns in the fall, so that the wife and little ones may have aught to eat and wear through the long, cold winter? Is this not more sensible than to spend the time in idleness, as Jesus and his disciples did, strolling from place to place, without apparent object, aim, or enterprise?

Is not industry far more conducive to virtue and usefulness than idleness and vagabondism? Is not an enterpris-

ing farmer, who raises his own bread and the bread his wife and children need, far more commendable than the worthless tramp, who wanders over the country without an aim in life save to eat what the toil of others has produced?

If in this country we should do as Jesus said, and take the birds for our guide, would not the utmost destitution and degradation overspread the land? Do the birds sow and gather into barns? Do they lay up stores for their little ones for a rainy day or for a cold, biting winter? Should we do as they do, and migrate north and south twice a year with the change of the seasons, doing nought to produce anything for our support, save what we could pick up by strolling around and fishing, perhaps, now and then? Would not that course inevitably soon produce the most wretched state of savagism and degradation? Would that style of life please thee most of all?

Would it not be vastly better for man to look ahead and anticipate the needs that may arise, and by industry and frugality to provide for them in time? Is it not indeed a virtue in summer to prepare for winter, in youth and manhood for old age, and in almost every respect to act differently from the habit of the birds of the air, who live from day to day and from month to month on what they can pick up here and there?

Would it not have been just about as sensible for Jesus to have instructed his hearers to fly about in the air with wings, to make nests in the trees, and live by what worms, bugs and insects they could find, as to advise them to do as the birds do in other respects?

Is it not the highest type of men that show foresight and enterprise, that take cognizance of the needs of the future, and make preparation for the same by laying up stores for the time of need?

On the other hand, are they not merely savages and barbarians who make no provision for the future, but live from hand to mouth by hunting and fishing, and by what they can pick up in a furtive manner?

Do not schools, institutions of learning, manufactories, towns and cities, railroads, steamboats, and nearly all the

advancements of civilization and science, grow directly out of the incentive to provide for the needs of the future and the disposition to be prepared for them when the needs are felt?

Does not the very doctrine of future rewards and punishments which Jesus taught, that his disciples must so live that they may reap a future reward, directly conflict with his injunction to "take no thought for the morrow"?

Is not, then, his beatitude here referred to both delusive and impracticable, and is it not most unworthy of the utterance of a great and wise teacher? In this view, can the teachings of Jesus compare for a moment with those of the old sages and philosophers mentioned?

Was not his conduct on many occasions, as well as his teachings, not what might be expected from a being all-wise, all-good, and perfect enough to create a world and a universe?

Was it a mark of wisdom or goodness to visit a fig-tree at the season of the year when he had no right to expect to find figs upon it, and because he did not find them to get angry and curse the tree, when it was not at all at fault?

Did the disappointment which he had no reasonable right to feel justify his flying into a rage and acting like a man without reason or consideration?

Would not a farmer in this day be pronounced a hopeless lunatic who should go out into his orchard in March to pick a wagon-load of apples, and because he found them not on the trees to fly into a rage and take his ax and cut them all down?

Was the conduct of Jesus much better in the temple when he became enraged at the money-changers whom he found there transacting business, as for years had been the custom, when he whipped and scourged them, and, in an angry and abusive manner, drove them out of the temple? Was such conduct fitting for a being all patience, mercy, goodness, and forbearance?

Did he not evince a similar disposition in his parable of the ten pieces of money, when he said, "But those of mine enemies which would not that I should rule over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me"?

Had he really been a perfect being, one all-powerful and wise, would he have taught his disciples that the highest moral merit depended upon a certain line of belief, when he must have known that no intelligent persons can fix up their belief at short notice and just according to order? Would he not have known that belief is always conformable to evidence, and that a person cannot believe as he is commanded, or even as he chooses himself?

Was it the perfection of justice in him that caused him to pardon the woman caught in the act of adultery on the ground that others had committed similar offenses? Did it make the slightest difference with her guilt whether others had been innocent or guilty?

Did it show an amiable or kind-hearted disposition in him to harshly reply to the poor woman not of the Hebrew nation who applied to him to heal her child, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs"?

As a divine being, father alike over all, should he not have shown the same kindness to a Samaritan woman as though she had been one of the Jews? Was she any more a dog than they?

Was it not pandering to the vanity of his disciples to stimulate their hopes, by the promise that if they remained faithful to him they should all become kings, sitting on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel?

Was it impartial and divine justice that caused him to denounce whole cities in the view that some of the citizens should decline to properly receive the disciples he sent forth, when he uttered the harsh and unmerciful threat: "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my father which is in heaven"?

Did he prove himself a true prophet when he said: "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away before all these things are fulfilled," while not only many generations, but nearly two thousand years have since passed away, and the prediction then made is still unfulfilled?

Would an all-wise and truthful being make the unreasonable promise to his adherents that they should have the power to speak with new tongues, drink the most deadly

poison without harm, and handle deadly serpents with impunity?

Could a being of infinite mercy and goodness condemn to endless punishment those who should refuse to assist believers, or be unrepentant at his coming? Would he have talked coolly of everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels from the foundation of the world, and make it necessary that more than nine-tenths of his own creatures should suffer the torments of eternal flames?

Had Jesus possessed the presence and foresight which a divine being ought to possess, would he have been likely to choose as one of the special number of followers and bodyguards, a person who would turn against him, betray him to his enemies, and thereby cause his arrest, trial, and an ignominious, cruel death?

Had he been a being of perfect goodness and benevolence, would he not have condemned in strong terms the wrongs of human slavery and all descriptions of tyranny which tend to the degradation of man and woman?

Is there any instance on record where he denounced human slavery or human despotism by which thy offspring are held in the worst conceivable forms of bondage and oppression?

Would it not have been proper for him, on the other hand, to have taught that all just governments derive their rights to govern from the people themselves? Would it have been more than right for him to have recognized the great maxims of social and political freedom which are now better understood in the world?

Should he not have guaranteed religious freedom to all, and the right of every man to live up to the dictates of his own conscience?

Should he not have advocated equal social and civil rights to men and women? and in providing for a change in the Jewish divorce laws should he not have accorded the same facilities to women as to men?

On the other hand, was he known at any time to advocate the equal rights of women? and did he ever denounce the oppression by which they were despoiled of their dearest rights?

Would it not have been proper for him to have encouraged the mental and moral progress of the human race? Should he not have advised the study of the sciences, philosophy, and the arts—the great promoters of human progress and civilization?

Was he known during his earthly career to show any partiality to science and learning? and did he give any evidence that he possessed much knowledge upon those subjects?

As a great friend to the human race, would it not have been proper for him to have imparted new facts, new discoveries, and new inventions? Would he not thereby have furnished new truths, new light, and new understanding to the sons and daughters of men? By his not doing so, is it not fair to conclude that he knew little or nothing about them?

Did not Jesus merely reiterate the sayings and maxims that had been taught in the world hundreds of years earlier, without imparting any truth or any vital discoveries that the world had not possessed before?

Did he not fail to present any proofs that he possessed learning or knowledge superior to what other sages, philosophers, and reformers had exhibited before him?

Is there any proof whatever that he knew anything about the sciences of astronomy, geology, chemistry, mathematics, mechanics, biology, philology, psychology, or any of the other kindred branches of knowledge?

Is it unreasonable to think that the son of the Creator of the universe, who had dwelt from the dawn of eternity with his father, should know something about those great sciences which men have found to be of such great value? and are they not of far more consequence than the doctrines of a devil, hell fire, eternal torment and the unappeasable wrath of a merciful, loving God?

If it is true that Jesus taught the beautiful doctrine called the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have others to do unto you," and while he is to be commended for giving utterance to such grand and noble sentiments, is it not also true that the same beautiful doctrines were taught long, long before he uttered them? Were they

not just as beautiful from the mouths of others as from his ?

Was not that beautiful maxim inculcated nearly a thousand years earlier by Buddha, five hundred years earlier by Confucius, Pythagoras, and Socrates, as well as by Hillel, and many others of the ancient teachers and moralists ?

Was it not just as divine, just as beautiful, from their mouths, and just as worthy of the observation and adoration of men as when it proceeded from his lips ?

Is it not a fair conclusion for a reasonable person to arrive at that Jesus was merely a kindly, amiable, well-disposed personage, but that he did not possess a greater share of divinity than hundreds and thousands of others who have lived in the world, that he could not truthfully boast of superior knowledge or learning, and that with his commendable traits of character he also exhibited defects and imperfections common to mere men ?

Was it a mark of courtesy and mild manners on the part of Jesus when he was invited by a Pharisee to go home and dine with him, as narrated by Luke, that he should sit down to meat without washing his hands, as was the universal custom of the country, and when the matter was alluded to, that Jesus, instead of apologizing for his carelessness or forgetfulness, should at once go into invectives against his host and those of his class, calling them "fools" and denouncing them as being full of "ravening and wickedness" ? Would not such conduct now be pronounced rude and ill-mannerly ?

Was such a style of address calculated to make a kind-hearted host feel at ease, or to make a proud man any better ? Was such language designed to have any effect but to exasperate the feelings and excite anger ?

Does the fact that Matthew puts this attack on Pharisees, scribes, and lawyers in another place and on another occasion make the matter any better, or increase the probability of the narration ? If Luke gives the expletives and sweeping invectives as having been used on one occasion, and Matthew on another, does it increase the truthfulness of the two accounts, or of either of them ?

Is it not more probable that such harsh utterances were not made by a perfect person, and that their being assigned

to two different occasions are marks of decided inaccuracies in the story ?

Was it mild and Godlike in him to say "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees ! hypocrites ! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves" ? Was it a peculiarity of the Scribes and Pharisees to compass sea and land to make a proselyte ?

Was it amiability and geniality that caused him to exclaim : "Fill ye up also the measure of your fathers, ye serpents, ye spawn of vipers; how can ye escape the damnation of hell" ? Would not such harshness be well fitted to a maniac, or at least a fanatic ?

Are the following any better : "Woe unto you, blind guides!" "Child of hell!" "Serpents," "Engenderment of vipers," etc ; "Ye shall receive greater damnation," etc. ? Is it especially a mark of divinity to rail and denounce without reason ?

Is not this of a similar intemperate character : "If God were your father, ye would love me! Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lust of your father ye will do ; he was a murderer from the beginning ; a liar and the father of lying" ? Does not such language flowing spontaneously from a full heart rather indicate intemperance of expression than of winning love ? Rather than to denounce the devil in such general terms, would it not have been more fair to point out instances where that character had committed murder, and where he had told lies ? Is there any reliable instance on record where the devil has either murdered or lied ?

Was not the expectation of reward the principal incentive used by Jesus to induce his followers to perform good deeds like giving alms ? Should the desire for a reward really be the leading motive to prompt one to kindness and sympathy for our fellow-creatures ? Did not many of the old pagan philosophers teach a higher system of morality than this ?

Is to respond to an incentive of love or sympathy, without the hope of being rewarded for it, an ignoble or immoral trait that recompense should ever be held up as an induce-

ment? Does not the perpetual obtrusion of a reward vitiate precepts that would otherwise be good?

Was it the highest and most truthful of promises that Jesus made when he said, "Ask and it shall be given you," as though every blessing a man needed or wished for came by the simple asking? Would it not have been far better to have instructed his hearers to make personal exertions for what they most desired? Is it not better now that youth and children be taught to toil and labor for the things they most desire; that their success in life depends largely upon their own exertions, and that they cannot expect to get much for the mere asking? Dost thou make a practice of turning aside from thy prescribed work and varying thy plans and intentions because certain persons ask thee to do this, that, or the other, as may please their fancy? Does importuning and pleading on the part of those who must necessarily know far less than thou dost what should be brought about make the slightest difference with thee in the conduct of thy affairs or the affairs of the world?

Was it not an indication of a want of knowledge on the part of Jesus to consider such diseases as epilepsy, catalepsy, mania, various nervous diseases, and even dumbness, or lack of speech, as instances of the possession of the devil? Is it not reprehensible, in the light of modern science, to attribute to demons, spirits, genii, or fairies the various diseases which arise solely from natural causes? Does the devil have any more to do with a case of epilepsy than with an ordinary headache which arises from an overloaded stomach?

In teaching the parable of Dives and Lazarus, did he not inculcate an untrue theory, that a man like Dives, who by industry or good management had acquired a competence of the good things of this world, which thou hast provided in sufficient quantities, for a part of thy children at least, should be consigned to the tortures of hell therefor?

Are the habits of dressing handsomely and eating good dinners such direful offenses that for indulging in them a man should be made to suffer in burning flames forever?

On the other hand, should a man be carried to Abraham's bosom and allowed to remain there forever simply because he had been poor, miserable, and worthless—who had not

possessed energy enough to provide himself with the ordinary comforts of life—without other merit being ascribed to him? Is it indeed true that thriftiness is a crime to be punished with endless suffering, and improvidence and mendicancy virtues to be rewarded with eternal bliss?

Was it kind in old Abraham to taunt the rich man with his misfortunes in the sulphurous world, and virtually tell him it was all right that he should suffer, because he had had a comfortable living in this world?

Was it not a mistaken theory which Jesus inculcated that great virtue consisted in prayer, fasting, alms, vigils, demons, exorcism, mendicancy, feet-washings, not omitting the harsh metaphor about eating his body and drinking his blood? Can it be true that these crudities really constitute the basis of the highest order of morality?

Are they not all parts of pagan systems of religion, and have not the virtues of those forms of penance and self-inflictions been enjoined upon religious devotees for thousands of years?

Is it probable that Jesus impressed upon his disciples the value and importance of bearing the cross before he himself had borne his cross or had been impaled upon it? Was that not rather an after-thought and added to the gospel long after the crucifixion?

Was it an instance of high morality in Jesus, when about to enter Jerusalem, that he sent his two disciples into a village to take without permission an ass and colt they would find tied there?

Was not it just as wrong in principle for him to forcibly take another's property as for any other person to do so? Would it not have been better for him to have asked permission of the owner of the ass to use the same for a while?

Is it not a little singular that Matthew states that it was an ass and its colt, while Mark and Luke have it that it was a colt on which a man had never sat, and no ass?

Could the prophecy which Matthew quoted about the king of Sion sitting on an ass and a colt, the foal of an ass, have been correctly fulfilled in the way stated by Mark and Luke?

According to the way Matthew tells the story, was not

that ride of Jesus the first two-horse act, or rather two-ass act on record? Does not Matthew say that they placed Jesus on both the ass and the colt?

Was it not rather an assinine affair in Matthew to write it an ass and colt, when two other equally veracious witnesses leave the ass out and name only the colt?

Was not this event upon the occasion of Jesus entering Jerusalem, which, according to the first three gospels was the only time after his baptism that thy son entered Jerusalem, while John has it that he visited the city on four different occasions? If John was correct in his statement were not Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrong?

Was it a strictly truthful statement that Jesus made to his disciples when he told them if they had faith like a grain o' mustard seed they could remove mountains?

Has an instance ever been known where faith to the amount even of several pounds of mustard seed moved as much as one ton of earth or rock from a mountain?

Is there a single instance where faith alone has ever moved anything or performed any kind of work where natural force was necessary?

Would it not have been far more true had Jesus told his disciples that had they faith like a mountain, they could not with that alone move a mustard seed?

Did Jesus tell the exact truth when describing the signs that should follow those that believed in him; to wit: that they should speak with new tongues; that they should take up serpents; and if they drank any deadly thing it should not hurt them?

Has that saying proved true since that day? Has it been the rule with those who have believed on him that they have been able to speak new languages, that they could handle venomous serpents without danger, and that they could drink the most deadly poison with perfect impunity?

Are there any among the most zealous believers in him of the present day who have confidence enough in his sayings to handle copperhead snakes, moccasins, and rattlesnakes?

Would they dare to drink a solution of strychnine, corrosive sublimate, or prussic acid? If they are afraid to do this, does it not argue, most clearly, that they are not true

believers in thy son, or that he gave assurances that never were and never can be verified? Would not a copperhead snake or a dose of prussic acid take the same deadly effect upon a Christian as upon an unbeliever or a heathen?

Does believing or not believing any doctrine known in the world make the slightest difference as to the action of animal, mineral, or vegetable poison?

Is it not mischievous, and even worse, to hold out such untruthful representations that if fully believed might cause almost instant death?

Was it not a questionable species of morality in Jesus when he enjoined his disciples to procure swords? Did he not say (Luke xxii, 36), "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one"? Was not that rather belligerent counsel for a "Prince of Peace"?

As in that oriental country a person's clothing often consisted of but a single garment, were not his instructions obviously immoral? Could a sword by any means take the place of a garment?

Were any one at the present time to wear a sword in place of a garment, would it be thought sufficient covering, and would he be suitably arrayed to appear in public?

Would it not be considered bad economy and bad morals now for a man to sell his garments and invest the money in a sword? Would it not be decidedly better for him to keep his garments and go without a sword?

Has not the sword been a great source of evil in the world, causing a vast amount of misery and unhappiness, and did not Jesus do violence to his professions of peace in advising the purchasing of swords?

Was it not a very extravagant statement which John made when, in dismissing the subject of Jesus and wishing to leave the impression that the events in the life of the latter were numerous, he made use of this expression: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written?"

Could not the actions of any one individual who has not lived more than thirty-two years easily be all written in one large volume?

Though many millions of volumes have been printed, could not all the books that have yet been published be easily piled up on a single acre of land? Is it not then the height of absurdity to say that the whole world could not contain the books in which the acts of one young man should be written?

And are there not many other statements in the same volume which in a similar manner must be taken with very many grains of allowance?

GREAT JEHOVAH: Are we not to conclude that thy Son was unable to know the character of Judas when he chose him for a disciple, or that knowing just what he was, Judas was necessary to carry out the scheme of salvation and redemption which thyself and thy son had previously devised in heaven?

Is it not a fact that the part that Judas played in the great drama was equally as important as any other part of it? Was it not necessary that Jesus should have been betrayed, and without it would the scheme have been complete? If that is so, should not praise and thanks be extended to Judas instead of curses and maledictions?

For the same reason did not Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, and the Roman soldiers who crucified him also play a most important part? If they aided so much in carrying out thy heavenly purpose, should they not be revered as saints instead of their memory being loaded with opprobrium?

If the crucifixion was an essential part of the divine drama, which could not be omitted without the whole scheme of the world's salvation proving a failure, may we inquire whether it was thou who didst induce Judas, Pilate, and the soldiers to do what they did, or was it the devil who instigated them to do the deed?

If the devil did aid thee by using his influence in the grand business, is he not as much to be praised for the perfection of the plan of salvation as thy son or any other individual connected with it?

If one cog had been left out of the divine wheel, would not the entire machinery have proved a failure? Is not then each and every cog to be adored alike as the most lovable and praiseworthy of all devices and inventions?

Is it not a little singular that the accounts of the conduct and death of Judas should be so differently told by the two writers in thy holy book ?

Does not Matthew say that when Judas felt condemned for the perfidious part he had played, he cast down at the feet of the chief priests the thirty pieces of silver which he had received for betraying Jesus, and immediately went out and hanged himself, while the writer of the Acts states it very differently, saying Judas bought a field with the money, whereupon he fell headlong and burst asunder in his midst, and all his bowels gushed out ?

If it was true that he hanged himself, why did not the writer of the Acts say something about it ? If it was not true, why did Mathew say it was true ?

If it was true that he fell headlong and all his bowels gushed out, why did not Ma:thew say something about that ?

Is it by any means a common circumstance when a person falls for his bowels to gush out ? Was an instance of the kind ever known ? If it was true of Judas, were not the integuments of his body extremely tender ?

If both the statements are true, which event should have the precedence ? Did he hang himself before his bowels gushed out, or afterwards ?

Was not either mode of death sufficient to answer the purpose without resorting to the other ?

As a man would hardly hang himself after his bowels had all gushed out, or his bowels would hardly gush out after he had been hanged, is it not a pity that such a wide divergence from the truth was made by one or both of thy writers ?

Are people to be doomed to hell for not believing that Matthew and the Acts writer both told the truth about that Judas episode ? If they should think that one or both failed to tell the truth, shall they be condemned for it to eternal torture ?

Does not Luke say that Jesus, before his crucifixion, was arrested by the chief priests and elders in person, and does not Matthew say the chief priests and elders remained with Caiaphas, the high priest, while they sent an armed multitude to arrest Jesus ?

Does not Luke (xxii, 2), say the chief priests were afraid to arrest Jesus because of the people who were friendly to him ? and does not Matthew say Pilate was afraid to release Jesus for fear of the people ? (Matt. xxvii, 22, 23, and 25).

Does not Mark say he was crucified on Friday, and on the day of the Passover, and yet is it not true that the Passover, according to the established rule among the Jews, never came on Friday ?

Is there not a discrepancy as to the place where Jesus was crucified ? Does not Matthew say it was Golgotha, while Luke says it was Calvary ?

Is there not a disagreement as to what were the last words of Jesus as he gave up the ghost ? According to Mark, were they not, " My God, my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ? " according to Luke, " Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit ; " according to John, " It is finished , " while Matthew does not say that he uttered any last words ?

Does not John say the body of Jesus was embalmed after his crucifixion, while according to Mark and Luke it was not the case ?

Is it not to be regretted that so many discrepancies and contradictions should exist in the book which thy followers declare that thou didst write ?

Have not nearly all the various books constituting the Scriptures, at one time or another, been discarded or disbelieved by those who professed to be thy people ?

Did not the sect of Pharisees among the Jews accept only the five books of Moses and reject all the prophets ?

Did not the Marcionites in the early Christian centuries reject the books of Moses and the prophets, introducing other writings in their stead ?

Did not the Marcionites also repudiate the Old Testament in its entirety as spurious and bad, and did they not reject the four Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul on the same plea ?

Did not Carpocrates and his followers likewise reject the whole of the Old Testament, and also maintain that Jesus was only a man like other men ?

Did not the Ebionites admit Matthew's Gospel, but neglect the three others, and also the Epistles of Paul ?

Did not the Manicheans write a gospel of their own, and neglect the writings of the prophets and the apostles ?

Did not the Etz-ites put forth a certain book which they affirmed came from heaven, and did they not discard the books of the Scriptures ?

Have not many of thy servants, and among them no less than Martin Luther, deny that the book of the Epistle to the Hebrews was not written by St. Paul ?

Did not Origen, the early Christian Father, invent some rambling allegories and silly stories, calculated to bring discredit upon the Scriptures ? Did he not go so far as to falsify and corrupt some of the principal points of doctrine ?

Did not the Alogians attribute to the heretic Corinthus the Gospel and Apocalypse of St. John, and for this reason neglect them ?

In short was not the authenticity and divinity of the books of the Bible knocked about, credited and discredited alternately, for several centuries before it was decided which were thy Word and which not ?

Was it not true that within the first three Christian centuries many pagan notions, rites, and ceremonies were introduced into thy Church, and have they not been retained to the present time ?

In fact, are not all the dogmas, rites, and ceremonies in the Christian Church of pagan origin ?

We have asked about the Trinity, the idea of incarnation, of the virgin and child, and inquired of thee if not almost every pagan nation held to them. Is it not strictly true ?

Is not the symbol of the cross far older than Christianity ?

Were not monasteries built in the mountains of Asia centuries before the Christian era ?

Is not the doctrine of devils and hell far older than Christianity ?

Has not the doctrine of the immortality of the soul been taught for thousands of years ?

Were not the rites of Baptism and the sacrament of the Eucharist believed in by the ancient pagans ?

Did not the pagans have their saints and worship them long before Christian saints existed ?

Didst thou approve of the persecutions which thy Church practiced and kept up for many centuries ?

Didst thou approve of the operations of the Inquisition, the auto da fé, and the numerous modes of torture and death which thy Church practiced to portray thy love to the human family ?

If thou didst not approve of this cruel persecution, and if it was thy will that they should not take place, why didst thou not interfere, and put an end to such ~~cu~~agious conduct?

Would one not be justified in thinking that thou either didst not care for the sufferings which thy offspring were forced to endure, or that thou didst not have the power to lessen their wretchedness ?

Are not millions of thy creatures left by thee to get along through this weary world the best way they can, without the appearance of direct assistance from thy all-powerful hand ?

Is it at all strange that human beings, when suffering the pangs of hunger, the agonies of sickness and disease, the cruelties inflicted by enemies, and the thousands of instances where wretchedness and unhappiness are visited upon them, and they look to thee for aid and succor, and they cry to thee in vain, should conclude that thou art deaf or powerless, or indifferent to their sufferings ?

Have those in the Christian faith, who claim that they are specially thy children and immediately under thy approving smiles, really any greater proofs of thy presence, of thy kindness and thy favor, than those who make no profession of being under thy protection, or of belonging to thy select number ?

Is the claim true which thy Christian followers make when they assert that their system is divine, on the ground of its extensive prevalence over the world, and that more have believed in its doctrines than in other creeds ?

Is not such a claim totally unfounded ? Are there not as many Brahminists in the world as Christians ; nearly as many Mohammedans, and three or four times as many Buddhists ?

If the number of Christians proves their system to be divine, is not Buddhism supereminently divine ?

Is it true that thou carest nothing for all those devotees of pagan systems of religion ? If they have to accept Christianity in order to escape the flames of hell, why, pray, takest thou no more means to bring them to the knowledge of the truth ? Hadst thou rather they should perish than to stretch forth thine hand to save them ?

Is not the claim, too, that Christianity has been the cause of civilization in the world an untruthful one ? Did not southern Europe have a better state of civilization five centuries prior to the Christian era than it had for ten centuries subsequent to that time?

Was not superstition, bigotry, intolerance, darkness, persecution, and all the attending evils the rule in the Christian Church for a thousand years after it became a political power?

Did not civilization, together with the arts and sciences, come more from the unbelievers of Arabia than from a Christian source, and did not education and civilization come into vogue more in spite of the Church than by its help and good will?

Did not the leaders and rulers of the Church struggle for centuries to keep back education, mental liberty, and general intelligence, and has not the system, with its powerful priesthood, been the strongest barrier to overcome which they have ever met with?

Does not the very existence of intelligence, mental culture, and free schools for all classes have a stronger tendency to exterminate the mists and fogs of superstition and baseless creeds than any other known influence ?

Does the sun shine any brighter, the rains fall any gentler, the breezes play any pleasanter upon those who believe in thee, in the divinity of thy Son, and the infallibility of thy Scriptures than upon the believers in Brahma, Buddha, Allah, Mumbo Jumbo, or no God at all.

If a believer and an unbeliever have each a farm of good land side by side, the first praying to thee morning, noon, and night, and drawing down a long face whenever thy name is mentioned, the second making no prayers, and keeping a cheerful countenance, plowing deeply, cultivating thoroughly will not the unbeliever have equally as good crops, as much

grass to the acre, and as much corn to put into his crib as the long-faced prayer-maker and devout believer?

If two ships start together to cross the ocean, the one an old, leaky, rotten craft, but with a praying captain and a praying crew, the captain of the other ship a firm believer in the laws of nature and in the superiority of reason over superstition, but an unbeliever in revealed religion, supernaturalism, and special providences, with a crew of the same character, if a storm arises and a terrific gale drives the ships before it for twenty-four hours, will not the unbelievers, in the firm, staunch ship, be much safer than the praying band in the dilapidated old hulk ?

Are the forces of nature, the action of the universe, the motions of the earth and the heavenly bodies, the fertility of the soil, the intensity of the sun's rays, the depth of rainfall, the fury of storms, the changes of climate, the ebbing and flowing of tides, affected even in the slightest degree by belief or disbelief in any system of faith ?

Can prayer and praise, long faces, and self-righteousness, have any more favorable effect upon thee or upon the forces of nature than practical common sense and an intelligent reliance upon the laws of the universe, with a total disregard of fables, myths, and superstitions ?

In view of the fact that the universe moves along regardless of opinions and creeds, and that even gods and redeemers make no apparent difference in the operations of nature or in the happiness and destiny of man, could not the superstitious belief in gods and demigods, in virgins and immaculate conceptions, in devils and demons, in hells and purgatories, with all that the creeds imply, be renounced without the slightest damage to any of the human race ?

Has not god-making been an occupation that ignorant, superstitious man, led by a wily, interested priesthood, has kept up in the world far too long, and could they not now be dispensed with without damage to any party concerned ?

Have not gods, religions, and creeds made a great deal of trouble for the human race, leading to wars, massacres, carnage, and bloodshed enough to saturate the entire earth with blood, or sufficient to make an ocean that would float every vessel in the world ? Would it not have been vastly

better for the human race had it had far less of gods, far less of devils and ghosts, but more of love and sympathy for the human family?

Is not man better employed in doing acts of kindness and good will to his fellow beings than in spending his hours, his days, and weeks, and years in offering oblations and adoration to an unknown and incomprehensible God, located somewhere above the clouds?

Is it not about time that the world make a change, and devote far less effort in trying to find out what will please the gods, and more to finding out how to make those around him better and happier?

Are not the gods—even admitting they have an existence wholly beyond the reach and knowledge of man, and hence beyond his power for good or harm?

Can man do any more towards injuring or benefiting the gods than he can put out the light of the sun or stop it in its course?

Are any of the gods either pleased or displeased at anything man chooses to do?

Are not science, education, and civilization, doing greater good in the world to-day than all the blind creeds, all the blind faith in all the personal gods that have ever held rule in the world?

Is it not about the best thing the men and women of the world can do to store their minds with useful knowledge, to become better and better acquainted with the laws of their being and of the universe around them, and drop, with as little delay as possible, all the religious creeds, all the rites and ceremonies, all the faith in priests and bibles, all the allegiance to myths and fables, that the race has indulged in for the last five thousand years?

If man strives as hard to do good to his fellow-man as he has striven to please and placate unknown gods, will it not be vastly better for the world?

Great Jehovah, possibly we owe thee an apology. We have detained thee and importuned thee now for a long time; but we trust we have not seriously offended thee. We greatly doubt if anything puny man can say will have a serious or unpleasant effect upon thee. We hope thou

hast taken no offense at the plainness or persistence of our inquiries, for thou hast said thou wouldest be entreated of.

Thou hast been patient with us; thou hast taken no offense at aught we have inquired of thee; and seemest just as pleased and serene as though we had opened not our mouth and inquired of thee nothing.

As thou hast shown no ill will towards us, and seemed not annoyed with us, may we not infer that thou art not at all displeased at our importunities?

Wast thou in the least annoyed by our earnest questioners, or didst thou feel thyself or thy cause in the least danger from the work we are prosecuting or the course we are pursuing, couldst thou not easily shut off our breath and wipe out our existence? As thou shovest no disposition to do this, may we not safely conclude that thou feelest no such desire?

We have not put these questions to thee in a mere idle or irreverent spirit. The inquiries made have been upon such subjects as need light in the view of the sons of men.

We trust our desires are duly appreciated, and we would be glad to receive replies to our inquiries whenever thou canst make it convenient to vouchsafe them. The world needs far more light upon theological and natural subjects, and it behoves all to keep a spirit of inquiry and investigation. We trust thou wilst cast no impediments in the way of our increasing our knowledge.

On some future occasion we may address thee again, when we doubt not we will be accorded as patient a hearing as we have now been favored with.

Accept our thanks for the undisturbed state of mind thou hast evinced through the long interview we have troubled thee with. We have been pleased to know thou hast maintained an unruffled spirit toward us, and that thou hast shown no disposition to do us the slightest injury.

Hoping that light and knowledge and health and happiness may spread and increase among all of earth's children, and that all the gods and devils may retire to a state of happy rest and blissful quietude through all coming time, I reverently subscribe myself, Devoutly thine,

A TRUTH SEEKER.

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